

MIENNONITE

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The Relevance of Menno Simons for Evangelical Christians

What Christians could learn from Menno Simons and how he rescued the Anabaptist movement.

John D. Roth

The story reads a lot like Waco and the Branch Davidians in 1993, only it was the spring of 1534 in the city of Muenster (located in what is today the west-central region of modern Germany). Hundreds of Dutch-speaking Anabaptists—mainly artisans, peasants, and shopkeepers—converged on the city. They were united by their common opposition to infant baptism and the sacraments. But they were also driven by a primal fear forged on the anvil of torture and by an eschatological conviction that Muenster was to become the New Jerusalem, the site chosen by God for the reestablishment of his kingdom on earth.

In the months that followed, the so-called Anabaptist Kingdom of Muenster quickly degenerated into a morass of religious fanaticism and excess. Jan van Leyden—the David Koresh of the 16th century—appointed himself the king. He instituted a reign of terror that included polygamy (he took for himself no fewer than 12 wives), the elimination of private property, forced baptisms of the city's non-



Menno Simons, MDCLXXXIII. Credit: Charly et Carire-Lise Ummel, L'Eglise Anabaptiste en Pays Neuchatelois, Societe Suisse D/Histoire Mennonite, 1994.

Anabaptist inhabitants, and armed preparations for a glorious final battle in which the elect gathered in Muenster would vanquish the godless.

But in the summer of 1535, the New Jerusalem of Muenster met with a violent demise. Armies of the Catholic Bishop von Waldeck first besieged, then stormed the city,

and the sordid affair came to a bloody and violent conclusion.

For most North Americans, Waco-type images are not their first impression of today's Mennonites, the spiritual heirs to the early Anabaptists. Instead, when most of us think of Mennonites, images of their Amish cousins come to mind: a hardworking, honest, and rural people, committed to a quiet sober life of humility, simplicity, service and, above all, to Christian pacifism; they shun politics—and sometimes each other as a matter of church discipline—and emerge in the public eye only for massive quilt auctions to support overseas relief work or to clean up after natural disasters.

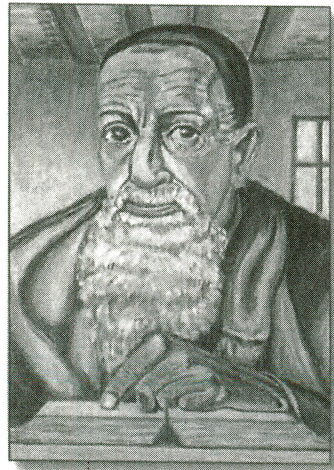
The contrast between this idealized image of contemporary Mennonites and the Muensterites of the 16th century could hardly be more striking. Who intervened to accomplish this amazing turnaround?

The answer is Menno Simons. Out of the ashes of Munster, a new Anabaptist group emerged, led by Menno Simons (1496-1561), a Catholic priest turned radical reformer. Menno restored stability

1496
Birth of Menno Simons

Time line by Richard A. Kauffman. Used by permission.

1483
Birth of
Martin Luther



1509
Birth of
John Calvin

1513
Birth of
John Knox

1484
Birth of
Ulrich
Zwingli



1517
Luther's
95 Theses

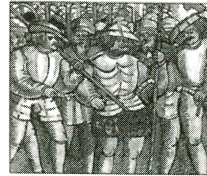
1521
Diet of Worms
(Luther's "Here
I stand" speech)

1524
Ordained as priest,
assigned to Pingjum
parish

1523-25
Zwingli's reforms
in Zurich

1525
Swiss Brethren
(Anabaptists)
break with Zwingli

1524-25
Peasants' War



1527
Schleitheim
Confession
(Anabaptist)



1530
Augsburg
Confession
(Lutheran)

1531
Called to
Witmarsum,
his home
parish



1531
Zwingli's
death in
battle

1534-35
"New Jerusalem"
established in
Münster

1535
Menno speaks
out against
Münsterites

1475

to a group in which some had broken loose from their theological moorings. His leadership sought to balance the eschatological impulses of a persecuted sect with the model of a disciplined, visible church ruled by the authority of Scripture. To a movement of uneducated artisans, deeply suspicious of trained "school theologians" (*Schriftgelehrten*),

Menno brought a measure of theological sophistication that blended central themes of orthodox Christianity with the distinctive nuances of the radical reformation. Later known as the Mennonites, the group that gathered around his leadership espoused a biblicism shorn of private visions and advocated a sober discipline of its mem-

bers, which eventually earned them the sobriquet of "the quiet in the land." They explicitly renounced violence and political power. To be sure, well before Menno emerged as a leader, there were other Anabaptist groups who were committed to biblical pacifism.

On the occasion of his 500th birthday, the career and thought of

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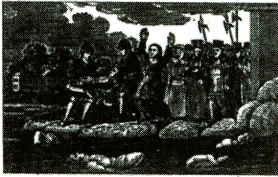
Microfilms of Volumes I-L of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* are available from: University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

1536
Calvin's *Institutes
of the Christian
Religion*
(first edition)



Deeply biblical, thoroughly Christocentric, steeped in the evangelical language of the new birth and the great commission, Menno offers modern evangelicals an inspiring example of leadership that balances zeal and discipline, piety and theological depth, courage and wisdom.

1536
Left priesthood,
joined Anabaptist
movement



1536/7?
Marriage
to Gertrude

1537?
Ordained
as Anabaptist
leader

1539
*Christian
Baptism*

1539-40
*The Foundation
of Christian
Doctrine*

1541
*The True
Christian Faith*

1542
Emperor issues
edict against
Menno

1543
Left Holland
for Germany

1546
Luther's
death

1549/1552
Book of
Common Prayer
(Church of
England)



1555
Peace of
Augsburg

1561
Menno's Death

1563
Thirty-Nine
Articles
(Church of
England)

1564
Calvin's death

1566
Second Helvetic
Confession
(Reformed)

1572
Knox's death



1575

Menno Simons merits renewed consideration. Deeply biblical, thoroughly Christocentric, steeped in the evangelical language of the new birth and the great commission, Menno offers modern evangelicals an inspiring example of leadership that balances zeal and discipline, piety and theological depth, courage and wisdom.

Reformer on the run

Menno was born sometime in 1496 in the small Friesen town of Witmarsum in the north of the Netherlands. The son of a farmer, he attended grammar school at a monastery, where he likely learned Latin and gained some acquaintance with the church fathers. At the age of 15, Menno entered a novi-

tiate and five years later became a deacon in the Catholic church.

At the time of his ordination to the priesthood, the Reformation in the Netherlands had found expression primarily in the form of local resistance to the sacraments. Indeed, soon after he began his first assignment as a vicar in his father's native village of Pingjum, Menno himself experienced doubts and, by his own account, gave himself over to "playing cards, drinking, and frivolities of all sorts." But in 1531, the martyrdom of Sicke Freeriks Snijder—"a godfearing, pious hero" in nearby Leeuwarden, beheaded by state authorities for the crime of rebaptism—prompted Menno to embark on a fresh and systematic reading of the Bible

"I examined the scriptures diligently," he wrote in his autobiographical *Departure from the Papacy*, "and pondered them earnestly, but could find no report of infant bap-

tism." Still, he vacillated. Though intrigued by the staunch biblicism of the Anabaptist movement, he nonetheless accepted a promotion as a priest in his home church at Witmarsum in 1531 and continued to carry out the duties of his office for the next three years, all the while struggling with the tension between his understanding of Scripture and received Catholic tradition.

In the end, it was not a new intellectual insight that led Menno to break with the old church, but rather the fanatical excesses of the Anabaptist movement itself. In the spring of 1535, as the horrors of the Muensterite kingdom unfolded, Menno penned his first surviving tract, a polemic against Jan of Leyden, in which he denounced the private visions and impatient violence of the Muensterites and laid the groundwork for a biblical hermeneutic based firmly on the teachings of Christ.

For the next nine months, Menno attempted to preach his new message of evangelical reform from the pulpit of his parish church in Witmarsum. But finally, on January 20, 1536—precisely when public sentiment against the Anabaptists had reached a crescendo—Menno resigned his priestly office; gave up the salary, status, and security of his former identity; and publicly aligned himself with the Anabaptist cause. “Without constraint,” he wrote, “I renounced all my worldly reputation, name and fame, my unchristian abominations, my masses, my infant baptism, and my easy life, and I willingly submitted to distress and poverty under the heavy cross of Christ.”

Shortly thereafter Obbe Philips, leader of the beleaguered pacifist remnant of Dutch Anabaptism, ordained Menno as an Anabaptist pastor. Immediately Menno set about to rebuild the scattered and dispirited brotherhood. For the next three years, he traveled almost constantly—preaching, baptizing, instructing new believers in the faith, denouncing the apocalyptic remnants of the Munsterite kingdom—while simultaneously writing a flurry of apologetic treatises, including *The Spiritual Resurrection* (1536), *Meditation on the Twenty-Fifth Psalm* (1537), *The New Birth* (1537), *Christian Baptism* (1539), and his most influential work, *Foundation of the Christian Doctrine* (1539-40).

By 1542, Dutch authorities in Leeuwarden publicized a reward of 500 guilders for Menno’s capture. Remarkably, he eluded arrest for the next two decades. Traveling with his wife, Gertrude, and their three children, Menno lamented in 1544 that he “could not find in all the countries a cabin or hut in which [we] could be put up in safety for a year or even half a year.” Although he successfully eluded arrest, numerous tales circulated of his narrow escapes from the authorities.

One oft-repeated, though likely apocryphal, story recounts how



Rodney Harder. Pencil drawing, 1978. Copyright by California Mennonite Historical Society. The original hangs in the main lobby of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary Administration Building, Fresno, Calif. (Prints are available, \$25)

Menno was once traveling by stagecoach when a group of armed horsemen, carrying a warrant for Menno’s arrest, overtook the carriage. As it happened, Menno was seated outside next to the driver. When the soldiers asked him whether Menno Simons was in the carriage, Menno leaned into the coach and said, “They want to know if a Menno Simons is in there.” When the occupants said no, Menno answered his pursuers: “They say he is not in there.” The horsemen continued on their way.

Menno preached a gospel of the new birth, giving prominent attention to distinctive Anabaptist convictions regarding adult baptism, the priesthood of all believers, pacifism, and a rejection of the oath and magisterial offices. During the last period of his life, Menno’s writings took on an increasingly polemical character as he defended the Anabaptists from attacks from without (against Reformed theologians such as John a Lasco, Martin Micron, and Adam Pastor) and heresy from within (against fellow Anabaptist David Joris, for example, on the question of prophetic visions). Menno died on January 31, 1561, at the age of 65 in

Fresenberg, a haven of refuge in north Germany and site of the press that printed many of his later works.

The followers he left behind—known as Mennists or Mennonites as early as 1542—were not altogether unified. But his legacy as a prolific writer, a theologian, and a polemicist lived on in the broader Anabaptist tradition. A recent bibliography of his published writings runs to 200 entries in Dutch, German, English, and Spanish. On the occasion of his 500th birthday, nearly a million Mennonites, scattered in six continents and over 60 countries around the world, are paying him special honor.

No other foundation

It would be presumptuous to suggest that Menno was a reformer on a par with Luther or Zwingli, or that his *Foundation of Christian Doctrine* could be read as a parallel to Melancthon’s *Loci Communes* or Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Menno never enjoyed the leisure to reflect systematically on his theology, and his emphasis on practical holiness did not harmonize well with abstract theological argumentation. Written in the white heat of debate, Menno’s writings today sound somewhat defensive in tone. He can be repetitious, even bombastic, overwhelming opponents as much with a flurry of scriptural references as with carefully nuanced argument.

That said, however, Menno deserves a fresh reading today by those in the broader evangelical tradition who will find in his writings some surprisingly familiar themes.

Modern evangelicals will be impressed with Menno’s command of Scripture and the way in which all of his thought is suffused in biblical language and imagery. Wary of his contemporaries who had

allowed personal revelations and visions to transcend the authority of the written Word, Menno continuously defended Scripture as the foundation of the Christian life.

Contemporary readers will undoubtedly appreciate Menno's high view of Christ and his repeated insistence that the inner transformation of the Christian into a "new creature" is made possible only by the blood of Christ's atoning sacrifice. So central was the saving work of Christ to Menno's thought that he included on the title page of every book he published the Pauline text: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. 3:11, NIV). Menno also emphasized the active and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and the centrality of missions.

But Menno's writings also deserve a fresh reading because they offer a challenge—and even a helpful corrective—to contemporary evangelical theology. Consider first, Menno's understanding of salvation. Few reformers emphasized the centrality of the new birth more than Menno; indeed, he devoted a lengthy treatise to the theme in 1537 in which the themes of grace, repentance, and faith so central to the Protestant Reformation find eloquent expression.

But Menno stubbornly insisted that the new birth was more than simply the inner experience of forgiveness of sins. He emphasized the link between the new birth and the life of the "new creature," a life of Christian discipleship that gave tangible evidence of the gift of grace. It will not "help a fig," Menno insisted, "to boast of the Lord's blood, death, merits, grace or gospel if the believer is not truly converted from his sinful life."

To be sure, the believer never is fully freed from the taint of original sin—Menno did not preach perfectionism—but he had no patience for the popular appropriation of Luther's doctrine of justification



Gerald Loewen. T-shirt logo, 1996, Winnipeg, MB. (T-shirts are available, \$17 CAN)

that seemed to promote a casual approach to Christian ethics. The regenerate "live no longer after the old corrupted nature of the earthly Adam, but after the new upright nature of the new and heavenly Adam, Christ Jesus." Becoming "like minded with Jesus" meant actually to live like Jesus. "True evangelical faith," Menno wrote, "cannot lie dormant. It clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, it serves those that harm it, it binds up that which is wounded, it has become all things to all people." Menno challenges our temptation to preach a gospel of saving grace shorn of a gospel of empowering grace.

Menno's emphasis on a life of practical holiness was closely tied to his understanding of the church. "They verily are the true congregation of Christ who are truly converted, who are born from above of God, who are of a regenerate mind by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the Divine Word, and have become children of God, have entered into obedience to him, and live unblamably in his holy commandments."

Many of his writings sought to define the character of the true

church in contrast to the state-dominated official churches of his day. According to Menno, the true church was found in the local body of adult believers who voluntarily gathered to study the Word and pledged themselves to lives of discipleship and mutual aid one for the other. This community was an alternative society where violence and coercive force had no place, a setting where nurture in the faith and mutual discipline according to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 18 could happen in Christian love. Menno's emphasis on the church as a deeply committed fellowship challenged the Protestant temptation to regard the church as an institution closely allied with the state, charged with the task of maintaining the status quo, with an identity virtually independent of the lives of individual believers. Menno's view of the church necessarily implies an ongoing corporate discernment of the meaning of the gospel in a changing culture. Menno's understanding of the church as a voluntary gathering has become the Protestant norm in America.

But Menno's understanding of the church is also in tension with the modern impulse to view the church primarily in individualistic terms, as a setting in which to discover one's private understanding of faith. Baptism, in Menno's view, symbolized a new life in Christ as lived in the nurturing fellowship of other believers. Baptism marked a public statement of incorporation into a new body, the church. Called to present itself as the bride of the risen Christ, "without spot or wrinkle," the church offers a collective and visible witness to the world as a redeemed community.

But the church can only maintain this character if its members actively discern the will of God in their lives and willingly exercise church discipline as an act of Christian charity and love to the struggling or fallen believer. This view of the church assumes that a commitment to the larger body of believers will

necessarily qualify individual freedoms to live faith strictly in accordance with personal inclination. In light of the ongoing highly publicized moral failures of prominent church leaders, modern evangelicals will find in Menno fresh insights on the questions of accountability and discipline.

Called to peace

Perhaps most radical of all, Menno's writings challenge contemporary evangelicals to rethink the question of Jesus' teachings on peace, and particularly the easy alliance modern Christians have made with the political order.

In our own time, the graphic accounts of bloody massacres and human atrocities committed against each other by the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda have all but disappeared from the headlines these days. Yet, for evangelical Christians, there is an element in the Rwanda story that should haunt our consciences for a long time: 90 percent of Rwanda's people are professed Christians.

To the African church, Rwanda had been a success story. Yet according to an InterVarsity leader in the region, missionaries preached a gospel about having a right relationship with God but not necessarily right relationships with one another. "This is why we can be 90 percent Christian, yet kill in the name of ethnicity," he says.

Preaching a gospel that separates relationship with God from human relations was anathema to Menno Simons. Worse, the haunting specter of Christians killing Christians was completely unthinkable. In his refutation of the violence at Muenster, Menno recognized the profound danger of mixing zealous Christian convictions with the coercive power of the sword.

At the heart of the new birth, he

insisted, was a recognition that God granted us his gift of forgiveness and love while we were still sinners alienated from him—indeed, while we were yet enemies of God. God's gift of salvation through Christ has world-transforming power precisely because it offers followers of Jesus a concrete model for love expressed in daily life. Because we have been saved and transformed by grace, we too will embody that same grace-filled love with all relationships, including—indeed, especially—those who might be considered our enemies.

"The Prince of Peace," wrote Menno, "is Jesus Christ. We who were formerly no people at all, and who knew of no peace, are now called to be . . . a church . . . of peace. True Christians do not know vengeance. They are the children of peace. Their hearts overflow with peace. Their mouths speak peace, and they walk in the way of peace" (*Reply to False Accusations*).


Living in accordance with this forgiving, gracious peace of God may well entail suffering. In the 16th century, the cost was social and economic marginalization, torture, and sometimes even death. But such suffering also offers a profound opportunity for witness to the love of God in the midst of a violent, hate-filled culture.

The prospect of suffering rather than retaliating with violence is certainly alien to modern notions of self-esteem; it is also alien to contemporary expressions of North American Christianity, whether on the Right or the Left, that seek to impose their visions of a godly society upon others. In a roundabout way, that brings us back to the story of the ill-fated Anabaptist kingdom of Muenster.

Christians have always been tempted to take control of history; to seize the levers of temporal power and make history come out "right," to try to align the kingdoms of this world with the kingdom of God. To be sure, the temptations of violence today are rarely as blatant

or extreme as that of Jan van Leyden—or even that of Rwanda. But a Christianity that aligns itself with a culture of violence—from the Left or the Right—seems to make a mockery of the grace it proclaims as its gift to the nonbelieving world.

Menno would argue that violence of any sort in the name of Christ is blasphemy, which calls for repentance. His writings call upon Christians to resist the seduction of a violent culture (even when that violence is sanctioned by the state). As a whole, evangelicals will probably not be convinced of Menno's arguments for Christian pacifism; but at the very least we should have an uneasy conscience about our too-easy rationalizations.

Regardless of one's understanding of Christian pacifism, in a profound way we are all heirs of Menno. The principles of religious voluntarism and a disestablished church—principles for which the 16th-century Anabaptists paid with their lives—are now assumed. Even though not a systematic theologian, Menno Simons' vision of reborn Christians living in a disciplined and visible church, and embodying in their daily lives the loving peace of God's grace, still has the power to inspire Christians today. On the 500th anniversary of his birth, evangelicals of all stripes—including Mennonites—would do well to blow the dust off Menno's writings and read them afresh. 

—John D. Roth is a member of the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church and teaches history at Goshen College.

This article was reprinted with permission from Christianity Today. It appeared in the October 7, 1996 issue of CT, titled "The Mennonites' Dirty Little Secret."

The Significance Of Menno Simons

The greatness of Menno Simons lies in three factors of influence: his character, his writings, and his message.

by H. S. Bender, 1936

Menno Simons was not the founder of the Mennonite Church. The Mennonite Church was founded in Zurich, Switzerland, in January 1525, by Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, George Blaurock, and others, 11 years before Menno Simons renounced Catholicism. Nor did Menno found the church in Holland. If any one deserves that title, it was Obbe Philips who began to gather the brethren in Friesland about 1533. Yet there is good historical reason for the Mennonite Church to bear the name of Menno Simons, for in the time of greatest need, Menno Simons was the heaven-sent leader who rallied the scattered brethren and gave them the leadership in faith and spirit and doctrine which they needed. He was who led them safely through the time of great tribulation "in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword."

Menno's greatness lay not so much in his eloquence, although he was a good preacher, not in his literary craftsmanship, although he could write well for the common man. He was no great theologian, although he knew how to present the plain teachings of the Bible with force and clarity. He was not even a great organizer, although he rendered a real service in the guidance which he gave to the bishops and ministers of the growing church. Yet Menno Simons was one of the great religious leaders of his day and land, perhaps the most outstanding religious leader of the

Netherlands in his time. His work and influence have had permanent significance on the history of the people and church which bear his name, and through them his influence has reached the larger circles of the free church of England and America.

The greatness of Menno Simons lies in three factors of influence: his character, his writings, and his message. His character was a steady, heartening, building influence in the long, hard years of persecution and struggle from 1535 to 1560, based on deep conviction, unshakable devotion, fearless courage, and calm trust. His writings, though they seem at times, as gathered together in his complete works, to be

repetitious and insignificant, included some admirable tracts for the times, pointed, plain, well adapted to their purpose. They reached the common people at the right time and were powerful agents in the building and strengthening of the church and in winning new adherents. But most of all it was the message of Menno Simons which made him a great leader in a great cause. He built no great system of theology nor did he discover any great new or long-lost principle; he merely caught a clear vision of two fundamental biblical ideals, the ideal of practical holiness and the ideal of the high place of the church in the life of the believer and in the cause of Christ.

On the basis of the first ideal, he called for a genuine change of life and the faithful practice of the Christian way of life as Christ taught and lived it; the life of righteousness, holiness, purity, love, and peace. For him Christianity was more than faith only; it was faith and works. And this practical Christianity meant for Menno the resolute abandonment by the Christian of all carnal strife and war, indeed of the use of force in any manner, as well as a thoroughgoing separation from the sin of the worldly social order. The ideal of the church which Menno held was the organizing principle of Christian doctrine and life in his entire thinking. For him the church was the representative and agent of Christ on earth, and as such was to keep itself holy and pure in life and doc-



Marvin Bartel. Ceramic, 1972. Fourth of a series created for Bartel's John F. Funk lecture. Based on Christoffel van Sichem's 1608 engraving.

trine and was to give a faithful witness for Christ until he came. These ideals of Menno have been the major formative ideals throughout the 400 of Mennonite history, for they were shared by the Swiss-South German Mennonites as well. They constitute the genius of the Mennonite Church. Out of them was born the ideal of complete separation of church and state, of toleration and freedom of conscience, of high moral and social ideals, of the preaching and practice of peace, of the supreme sovereignty of Christ over his own in this worldly world of ours—all ideals far in advance of their day, but which today have become the common and cherished possession of a large section of English and American Protestantism.

It is, therefore, not for the greatness of Menno Simons, the man and his human achievements, that we bring this tribute—the tribute we bring is to the greatness of the ideals and convictions which possessed his soul and commanded his life, and which have blessed countless thousands since his day. *D*

—From *A Brief Biography of Menno Simons*, written for the 450th anniversary of Menno's move from Catholicism to Anabaptism. This biography was included in the 1956 edition of the *Complete Works of Menno Simons* (Herald Press). Reprinted by permission.

John E. Sharp, on left, and Floyd L Rheinheimer discussing the Oral History Project, 1996. Rheinheimer has interviewed 15 men of Mennonite and Amish background who served in the military and has interviewed 30 individuals and/or couples on their life stories.
Credit: Dennis Stoesz

New Treasures: Archives of the Mennonite Church

**By Dennis Stoesz,
Archivist**

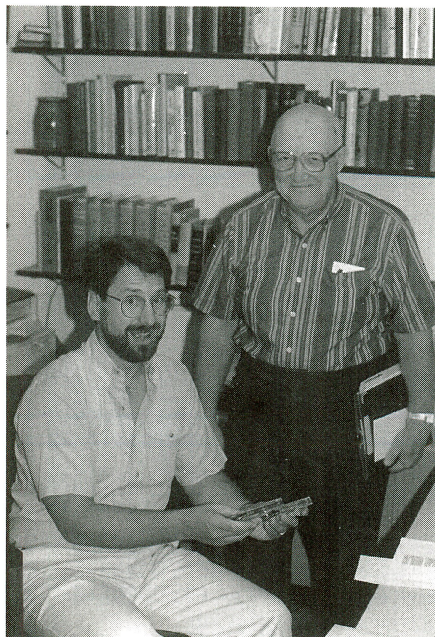
What follows is a sampling of personal papers and organizational records that have come into the archives during the last six months of 1996. They are listed alphabetically by the name of the collection.

Beechy, Atlee, Goshen, Indiana. Papers, 1944-1969, which reflect Beechy's involvement in Civilian Public Service, 1944-47; European relief under Mennonite Central Committee, 1946-49; involvement in I-W Coordinating Board, late 1950s and early 1960s; and Beechy's ongoing witness for peace, relief, and service during the 1960s, in Biafra, Haiti, Mississippi, Nigeria, and Vietnam. Also includes audio tapes of the commissioning service of

Beechy, 1966; interview with Beechy by ABC, 1966; a filmstrip of the work of Vietnam Christian Service, 1966-67; and an interview with Hull, of the Vietnam Christian Service team after the Tet Offensive, 1968. 14 linear inches. Donor: Atlee Beechy.

Fisher, Wayne L., Houston, Texas. Newspaper clippings on Amish, 1937-1993 (bulk, 1948-1974), that he collected since the late 1950s. The clippings focus primarily on the Amish conflicts with the legal system, such as education, social security, highway safety for buggies, etc., and are arranged by state and subject. Includes some actual court cases. Fisher recently published his research in a book entitled *The Amish in Court*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1996, 200 pages). Fisher was a member of the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom and helped furnish information to attorneys in preparation for cases regarding Amish society and belief. 13 linear inches. Donor: Wayne L. Fisher.

Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church, 1911- , Oral History Project, Floyd L. Rheinheimer, 1996. Interviews with 15 men who served in the military during World War II, 1939-1945; the Korean War, 1950-1953; and the Vietnamese Conflict, 1961-1975. Many of these men grew up within the Amish or Mennonite church, and most are still members of these churches. This project also includes interviews with 30 individuals and couples, about their life stories. Interviews were conducted by





Left: *Ira S. Johns (1879-1956) and Elizabeth Rickert (1877-1960), on their wedding day, Columbiana, Ohio, 1901. She was Mennonite from Lima Mennonite Church, Ohio, and he was Amish Mennonite from Clinton Frame, Ind. Notice the clothing worn at the turn of the century, and compare this with the plain clothing as shown in the photograph of this family in the early 1920s. Source: Vivian (Johns) Schlachach Photograph Collection.*

Below: *Ira S. and Elizabeth (Rickert) Johns family, Goshen, Ind., early 1920s. Back row (l-r): Miriam, Vesta, Vera, and Vivian. Middle row (l-r): Pauline, Elizabeth Johns, Daniel, Ira S. Johns, Mary. Front row: Galen Johns. Notice the plain clothing worn in the early 1920s, and compare this with more fancy clothes worn by the parents at their wedding, 1901. Source: Vivian (Johns) Schlachach Photograph Collection.*



Rheinheimer, a retired doctor from Milford, Ind., during 1996, with the project being sponsored by the Historical Committee. 6 linear inches. Donor: John E. Sharp, Director.

MennoLink, 1992- , Newark, Delaware. Electronic records, 1992-1996, of correspondence sent between subscribers of this electronic mail system. There were about 29 subscribers in June 1992 and about 620 by January 1996. MennoLink was founded in 1987, with roots in the Mennonite Council of Computer Users. An individual subscription list was developed through the efforts of Jon Harder, Bloomington, Minn., in 1992; another contact person is Thomas L. Lapp. 38 High Density Computer Disks. Donor: Ross Lynn Bender, Philadelphia, Pa.

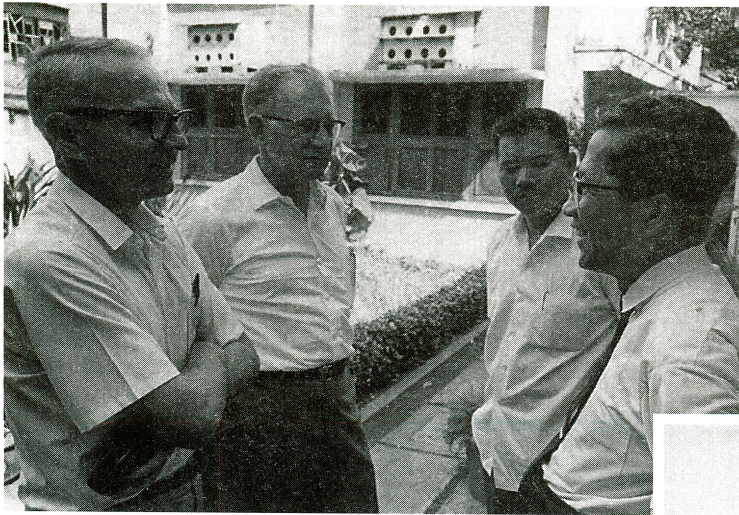
Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries, 1971- , Elkhart, Indiana. Official records, 1969-1990, including minutes, reports, and correspondence of five programs and/or sections of Congregational Ministries: family life, leadership, peace and social concerns, communication, and

administration. Persons involved in these programs included Howard J. Zehr, 1971-76; Ross T. Bender, 1972-74; Harold E. Bauman, 1974-88; Gordon Zook, 1978-89; Everett Thomas, 1989- ; John H. Mosemann, 1976-77; Hubert Schwartzentruber, 1972-79; Beulah Kauffman, 1974-80; David Helmuth, 1981-83; Frances Greaser, 1983-86; Clare Schumm, 1987-90; Dan Shenk, 1975-78; and Jon Kauffman-Kennel, 1978-85. 18 linear feet. Donor: Everett Thomas, Executive Secretary, and Rachel S. Fisher.

Mennonite Board of Missions, 1906- , Mennonite Media Ministries, 1954- , Harrisonburg, Virginia. Program Files, 1954-1994, containing reports, official documents, and background information on 16 programs operated by this Media Ministries over 40 years.

Includes radio, TV, and video programs and projects such as All God's People, In Touch, Encore, The Jesus Connection, Choice, Home Bible Studies, JELAM, Mennonite Hour, Radio Spots, TV Spots, Way to Life, Your Time, and non-English language programs, including Russian, German, Italian, Japanese, and Navaho. Materials include scripts, a list of the various programs, administrative reports, and evaluations, promotional files, and the responses from the various radio and TV stations who aired these programs. 47 linear feet. Donor: Lowell T. Hertzler, Business Manager, Media Ministries, and Ethel Hoffman, Office Services *Coordinator, Mennonite Board of Missions.

Schlachach, Vivian (Johns), 1903-1996. Photographs, circa 1870s-



Left: Atlee Beechy and Paul Leatherman (l-r) in discussion with Vietnam Christian Service (VNCS) officer Nguyen van Ninh, and Pastor Doan van Mieng, in Vietnam in July of 1966. Beechy served as Director of the VNCS program until Leatherman succeeded him in July 1966. Source: Mennonite Central Committee, Photograph Collection, photographer Lance Woodruff.

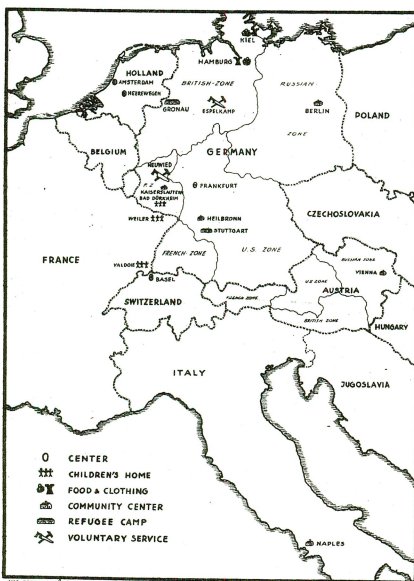
Below: Robert Miller and Paul Longacre (l-r) in white shirts, make a field investigation in Vietnam, November 1965. Source: Mennonite Central Committee, Photograph Collection.



1940s, of Allen (1848-?) and Sarah (Lehman) Rickert (1850-?) family, Columbiana and Mahoning Counties, Ohio, and of their daughter's family, Elizabeth (Rickert) (1877-1960) and Ira S. Johns (1879-1956), Goshen, Indiana. Also includes photographs of D. J. (1850-1942) and Nancy (Yoder) Johns (1849-1930) family, and of Vivian Johns when she was a school teacher at Clinton Community School, in the mid-1920s. Photographs show three generations of a family. They also illustrate the movement of Mennonites and Amish Mennonites from a more elaborate and fancy clothing up to the turn of the century, to that of

wearing more plain clothing in the early 20th century. 5 linear inches. Donor: Theron F. Schlabach, Goshen, Indiana.

Shoemaker, Elizabeth (Brubaker), 1856-1931, and J. S. Shoemaker, 1856-1931. Diary, 1877, of Elizabeth (Lizzie) Brubaker, who married J. S. Shoemaker on December 6, 1877. Also includes an autograph book of Elizabeth Shoemaker, December 1877; a 1910 passport for J. S. Shoemaker; and some 1910 certificates issued to J. S. Shoemaker and J. S. Hartzler by the Mennonite Board of Missions, for them to attend the World's Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, Scotland, and to visit Mennonite churches in Europe and Asia, especially India and Indonesia. 1 File. Donor: Elizabeth (Sieber) Hernley, Goshen, Indiana.



Map of locations and programs of Mennonite Central Committee in Europe, 1951. Source: Mennonite Central Committee, Photograph Collection.

Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORP), 1980-1996. Records, 1980-1996, including newsletters and correspondence, which reflect the various VORP programs being run across the United States of America and Canada, as collected by the Office on Crime and Justice, Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Akron, Pa. The first VORP program began in Kitchener, Ont., in 1974, and now there are over 70 such programs. 20 linear inches. Donor: Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz and Howard Zehr.


Wall, Cornelius, 1893-1985, and Agnes (Dueck), 1894-1973. Sound recordings, sound recording equipment, and photographs, 1948-1970, focusing on the Wall's service with Mennonite Central Committee in Europe, 1948-1960. The Walls routinely visited numerous camps such as Gronau, Bachnang, and others all over Germany, sharing the concerns of the refugees. Activities also

included youth retreats, Bible courses, presentations at Conference sessions and personal work. As a long-standing Bible school teacher, Cornelius Wall was also actively involved in helping the European Mennonite Bible School at Bienenberg, Switzerland, get started, 1953-58. He also served as its principal while Sister Wall was the "mother" of the student body. Collection consists of wire recordings, reel-to-reel tapes, a wire recorder, a reel-to-reel tape recorder, and negatives. 4 linear feet. Donor: Mary (Wall) and Ben Wiens, Hillsboro, Kansas.

Women's Mission and Service Commission, 1915- , Elkhart, Indiana. Official records, 1968-1995,

the bulk of which dates from 1987-1993 and reflects the work of Marian Hostetler as executive secretary, 1987-1996. Materials include correspondence, minutes, dockets, annual reports, officer lists, slide sets, and dramas. The files also reflect the various conventions, conferences, and projects through the years; the work of the secretaries of devotional life, family life, literature, peace and social concerns, and business and professional women; and the work being done at the district conference level. 4.8 linear feet. Donor: Marian Hostetler.

Zimmerly, John, 1816-1894, Early Mennonite Correspondence and Papers, 1708-1901, Collection. Two decorative art pieces, circa

1843-1877, belonging to John Zimmerly, one being a "Family Record of Johann Zimmerly and Elisabeth Boesiger, 1816-1877" who were married in 1856; and the other being an 1843 "Johannes Zimmerle, born December 13, 1816, Chavanot, France" illustrated art piece done by Joseph Beutler and given in friendship to John Zimmerly. Materials have been placed with the "John Zimmerly, Orrville, Ohio, 1822-1879" file in the Early Mennonite Correspondence and Papers, 1708-1901, Collection. 1 File. Donor: John Zimmerly, Jackson, Ohio. 

—Dennis Stoesz has served as archivist at the Archives of the Mennonite Church since 1989.

Directory of Mennonite and Related Church Historians and Committees

This directory lists North American Mennonite, Amish, and related historical committees, societies, conference historians, and interpretation centers. *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* publishes this list annually and would appreciate any updates or corrections from our readers.

Note the addition of the Illinois Amish Interpretive Center in Arcola. Wilmer Otto has been the visionary and organizer of this new center. jes

Allegheny Conference Historical Committee, Doris Ours, Rt. 2, Box 106B, Keyser, WV 26726, 304 726-4321

Atlantic Coast Conference Historian, Margaret Derstine, 2001 Harrisburg Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601, 717 687-8259

Brethren in Christ Historical Society, E. Morris Sider, Archives of Brethren in Christ Church, Messiah College, Grantham, PA 17027, 717 691-6048, Fax: 717 691-6042

California Mennonite Historical Society, Nona Johnson, 4824 East Butler, Fresno CA 93727, 209 453-2225, E-mail: kennsrem@fresno.edu

Casselman River Area Amish and Mennonite Historians, Kenneth L. Yoder, Box 591, Grantsville, MD 21536, 301 895-5687

Central District Conference Historical Committee, William Keeney, 140 North Lawn Avenue, Bluffton, OH 45817, 419 358-6017

Conference of Mennonites in Alberta, Henry D. Goerzen, R 1, Didsbury, AB T0M 0W0, 403 335-8414

Conference of Mennonites in Canada History and Archives Committee, Lawrence Klippenstein, Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftsbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4, 204 888-6781, E-mail: LKlippen@mbnet.mb.ca

Conservative Mennonite Conference Historical Committee, Elmer S. Yoder, 3511 Edison Street, Hartsville OH 44632, 216 877-9566

Delaware Mennonite Historical Association, John J. Yoder, Box 238, Greenwood, DE 19950

Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association, 31 Pickwick Drive, Leamington; mailing address: Harold Thiessen, Route 4, Leamington, ON N8H 3V7

General Conference Mennonite Church, John Thiesen, Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, KS 67117, 316 283-2500, E-mail: jthiesen@bethelks.edu

Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust, Galen Horst-Martz, 6133 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144, 215 843-0943, Fax: 215 843-6263

Hans Herr House Museum, Douglas J. Nyce, 1849 Hans Herr Dr., Willow Street, PA 17584, 717 464-4438

Heritage Historical Library, David Luthy, Route 4, Aylmer, ON N5H 2R3

Historical Committee and Archives of the Mennonite Church, John E. Sharp, 1700 South Main, Goshen, IN 46526, 219 535-7477, Fax: 219 535-7293, E-mail: johnes@Goshen.edu, Web Site: <http://www.goshen.edu/mcarcives>

Howard-Miami Counties Heritage and Genealogical Society, Elaine Sommers Rich, 112 South Spring Street, Bluffton, OH 45817, 419 358-1515

Illinois Amish Interpretive Center, Wilmer Otto, PO Box 244 Arcola, IL 61910, 217-268-3599

Illinois Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society and Illinois Conference Historian, Edwin J. Stalter, Mennonite Heritage Center, Box 1007, Metamora, IL 61548, 309 367-2551 or 815 796-2918

Indiana-Michigan Conference Historian, Daniel E. Hochstetler, 1008 College Avenue, Goshen, IN 46526, 219 533-7819, E-mail: 104370.3337@compuserve.com

Iowa-Nebraska Mennonite Conference Historian, Barbara Troyer, 1001 8th Avenue, Wellman, IA 52356, 319 646-2151

Juniata Mennonite Historical Society, Noah L. Zimmerman, The Historical Center, HCR 63, Richfield, PA 17086, 717 694-3543

Kidron Community Historical Society, Wayne Liechty, Box 14, Kidron, OH 44636, 216 857-3375

Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, Carolyn Charles Wenger, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602, 717 393-9745

Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, Lawrence Klippenstein, 484 Berkley Street, Winnipeg, MB R3R 1J9, 204 888-6718

Meetingplace, The, Curtis Brubaker, 33 King Street, St. Jacobs, ON N0B 2N0, 519 664-3518

Menno-Hof, Tim Lichti, Box 701, Shipshewana, IN 46565, 219 768-4117

Menno Simons Library and Archives, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 703 432-4000 E-mail: lehmanjo@lib.emu.edu

Mennonite Archival Centre, Hugo Friesen, Columbia Bible College, 32025 Dahlstrom Ave, Ste B, Abbotsford, BC V2T 2Z8, 604 853-6177, Fax 604 853-3063

Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Samuel Steiner, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G6, 519 885-0220 ext. 238, E-mail: steiner@watservl.uwaterloo.ca

Mennonite Brethren Churches (Canada) Historical Committee, Abe Dueck, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5, 204 669-6575

Mennonite Brethren Conference (North American) Historical Commission, Paul Toews, Center for Mennonite Brethren

Studies, 4824 East Butler, Fresno, CA 93727, 209 453-2225, E-mail: ptttoews@fresno.edu

Mennonite Brethren Church (USA), Peggy Goertzen, Center for MB Studies, Tabor College, Hillsboro, KS 67063, 316 947-3121

Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada, Vera Martin, R 2, West Montrose, ON N0B 2V0, 519 669-5379

Mennonite Church Historical Association, John E. Sharp, Historical Committee and Archives of the Mennonite Church, 1700 South Main, Goshen, IN 46526, 219 535-7477, Fax: 219 535-7293, E-mail: johnes@Goshen.edu, Web Site: <http://www.goshen.edu/mcarchives>

Mennonite Heritage Village, Harv Klassen, Box 1136, Steinbach, MB ROA 2A0, 204 326-9661

Mennonite Historical Association of the Cumberland Valley, Roy M. Showalter, 4850 Molly Pitcher Highway South, Chambersburg, PA 17201, 717 375-4544 or 301 733-2184

Mennonite Historical Library, Ann Hilty, Bluffton College, Bluffton, OH 45817, 419 358-3365

Mennonite Historical Library, John D. Roth, Goshen College, 1700 South Main, Goshen, IN 46526, 219 535-7418 E-mail: johndr@Goshen.edu

Mennonite Historical Society, Walter Sawatsky, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, 3003 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN 46517, 219 295-3726, E-mail: 72610.3063@compuserve.com

Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta, Henry D. Goerzen, 76 Skyline Cres NE, Calgary AB T1Y 4V9, 403 275-6935

- Mennonite Historical Society of Canada**, Ted E. Friesen, Box 720, Altona, MB R0G 0B0, 204 324-6401
- Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania**, Beth Rice Imchen, The MeetingHouse, 565 Yoder Road, Box 82, Harleysville, PA 19438, 215 256-3020, E-mail: mennhist@pond.com
- Mennonite Historical Society of Iowa**, Lois Swartzentruber Gugel, 710 12th Street, Kalona, IA 52247, 319 656-3732
- Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario**, Reg Good, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G6, 519 885-0220, E-mail: rgood@library.uwaterloo.ca
- Mennonite Information Center**, Dorothy J. Brenneman, 5798 County Rd. 77, Box 324, Berlin, OH 44610, 216 893-3192
- Mennonite Library and Archives**, John D. Thiesen, Bethel College, North Newton, KS 67117, 316 283-2500 ext. 304, E-mail: jthiesen@menno.bethelks.edu
- Michiana Anabaptist Historians**, John F. Murray, 303 East Indiana, Kouts, IN 46347, 219 766-3981
- Mifflin County Mennonite Historical Society**, Paul Bender, PO Box 5603, Belleville, PA 17004, 717 935-2598 or 717 935-5574
- Millbank Information Centre**, Glenn Zehr, PO Box 35, Millbank, ON NOK 1L0, 519 595-8037
- Missionary Church Archives and Historical Collection**, Tim Erdel, Bethel College, 1001 W. McKinley Ave., Mishawaka, IN 46545, 219 259-8511
- Muddy Creek Farm Library**, Amos B. and Nora B. Hoover, 376 N. Muddy Creek Road, Denver, PA 17517
- Nebraska Mennonite Historical Society**, Eldon Hostetler, 1014 First Street, Apt. 6, Milford, NE 68405, 402 761-3072
- North Central Mennonite Conference Historian**, Melvin Hochstetler, Route 1, Box 116, Wolford, ND 58385, 701 583-2562
- Northern District Conference**, Rachel Senner, Freeman Academy, 748 South Main, Freeman, SD 57209, 605 925-4237
- Northwest Conference Historian**, Harry Stauffer, Route 1, Tofield, AB T0B 4J0 403 662-2144
- Ohio Amish Library**, Paul Kline, 4292 Star Route 39, Millersburg, OH 44654, 216 893-2883
- Ohio Conference Historical Committee**, Kenneth Nisly, 3781 Cranwood Street NW, North Canton, OH 44720, 216 494-0120
- Oregon Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society**, Hope K. Lind, 28773, Gimpl Hill Road, Eugene, OR 97402, 503 344-5974
- Pacific Northwest Conference**, Margaret Shetler 5326 Briar Knob Loop NE, Scotts Mills, OR 97375, 503 873-6406
- The People's Place**, Merle and Phyllis Pellman Good, Main Street, Intercourse, PA 17534, 717 768-7171
- Pequea Bruderschaft Library**, on Old Leacock Road, one forth mile south of Gordonville, mailing address: 176 North Hollander Road, Gordonville, PA 17529
- Saskatchewan Mennonite Historical Society**, Dick H. Epp, 2326 Cairns Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7J 1V1
- Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians**, Nate Yoder, 1519 College Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22801, 540 432-4255, Fax: 540 432-4444, E-mail: yoderne@cc.emu.edu.
- Stark County Mennonite and Amish Historical Society**, Elmer S. Yoder, 3511 Edison Street NE, Hartville, OH 44632 216 877-9566
- Southeast Mennonite Conference Historian**, Martin W. Lehman, 765 Dean Avenue, Sarasota, FL 34237, 813 366-3381
- South Central Conference Historian**, Bernice L. Hostetler, Route 2, Box 77, Harper, KS 67058, 316 896-2040
- Swiss Community Historical Society**, Keith Sommer, Box 5, Bluffton, OH 45817
- Swiss Heritage Society**, Claren Neuenschwander, 805 W. Van Buren, Berne, IN 46711, 219 587-2784
- Virginia Conference Historical Committee**, James O. Lehman, Menno Simons Historical Library and Archives, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA 22801, 703 432-4170, E-mail: lehmanjo@lib.emu.edu
- Young Center for the Study of Anabaptist and Pietist Groups**, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA 17022, 717 367-1151
- Western District Conference Historical Committee**, Hilda Schmidt, Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117, 316 283-6300

News and Notes

The Riddle of Things Past is a conference for pastors, teachers, and conference historians, featuring *The Strains of Zion's Harmony*, a musical drama by John Ruth, and *The Mennonite Experience in America* Series. The event is scheduled for May 9-10, 1997, at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.

The conference will begin at 3:00 p.m. on Friday and adjourn at 3:30 p.m. Saturday. Speakers include John L. Ruth, Richard MacMaster, and Al Keim. Seminar offerings include training for congregational historians, resourcing for pastors and teachers, raising funds, using *The Mennonite Experience in America* Series for preaching and teaching, using computers for genealogy and records management, history as healer, and writing congregational histories.

A 5:00 p.m. dinner (Friday) will feature John Ruth's keynote address titled "The Riddle of Things Past." At 7:30 *The Strains of Zion's Harmony* will be presented by a cast of singers and actors from Franconia Conference. EMALA will meet at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday. At 2:15, a panel of speakers and seminar leaders will explore the theme of finding humor in our history.

The Mennonite Experience in America (MEA) Series of four volumes will be offered at a special 30% discount. Costs for the entire event, or for various parts, are as follows: Conference registration—\$25; drama tickets only—\$8; dinner and drama tickets—\$15; total package (conference, dinner, and drama)—\$35.

To register send a check to: Riddle of Things Past Conference, Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, VA 22801. For more information call 540 432-4255 or 219 535-7477.

The conference is being sponsored by the Virginia Mennonite Conference Historical Committee, the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians, the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church (Goshen, Ind.), and Eastern Mennonite University.

The Strains of Zion's Harmony looks at why two main conference affiliations exist among eastern Pennsylvania Mennonites, by listening to them converse and sing in 1844, three years before a split occurred. Lancaster and Virginia events are woven into the story by visitors from Lancaster County, Pa., and Singers Glen, Va.

Arranger/director Bill Gottshall of Souderton uses music of the 19th century, including tunes composed locally, to draw viewers into the emotions of the era. A graduate of Berklee College of Music in 1978, Bill was assistant to the music director of the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *My One and Only* and was instrumental in the production of the new hymnal of the United Church of Christ. He is owner of Northeast Music Service, a company creating music for radio, TV, videos, and industrial films.

John L. Ruth of Lower Salford has written/produced 30 films and videos on Mennonite history. His book on the Franconia and Eastern District Mennonite Conferences, *Maintaining the Right Fellowship*, was published in 1984, and his *The Earth Is the Lord's: A Narrative History of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference* is expected from the press shortly.

The drama will be presented at Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, Lansdale, Pa., March 20 and 21; Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, Lancaster, Pa., April 4 and 5; Marion Mennonite Church, Chambersburg, Pa., May 8; and at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va. May 9, 1997. The

musical drama was presented to sellout crowds in Harleysville, Pa. in December 1996.

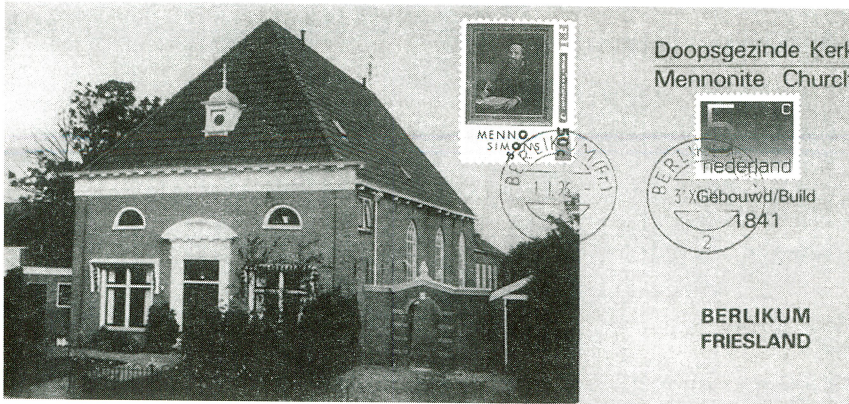
Menno Simons 501: Menno and Mennonites at the end of the 20th Century, a conference to examine the relevance of Menno Simons for Mennonites today, will be held at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa., May 16-18, 1997.

The weekend will feature presentations, responses, discussion, music and worship, and appearances by three Menno impersonators. Presentations will include: "Menno's Personality, Menno's Trajectory, and Menno's Church" by John L. Ruth; music written by James Clemens for the 500th anniversary of Menno's birth; "My Journey as a Son of Menno" by Mark Peachey; and first-person Menno Simons monologues by Gerald Brunk, Joel Alderfer, and John Sharp.

To register send a check of \$150 to Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, RR 5, Box 145, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666-8908 or call 800 839-1021 or 219 535-7477.

This conference is planned and sponsored by the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church and Laurelville Mennonite Church Center.

Gutenberg to Gigabytes: Mennonite Archives for the 21st Century is a new project of the Historical Committee and Archives of the Mennonite Church. This is a project to computerize the holdings of the Archives of the Mennonite Church. The use of this new technology will make research more efficient and will increase access to the collections. Digitizing manuscripts will decrease the need for on-site storage (now at the maximum limit), eliminate the need to



Commemorative post card produced by the Dutch Mennonite Church with a Menno Simons stamp issued by the Dutch government, 1996. Gift of Arlin Lapp.

handle fragile documents, and will safeguard the collection in the event of a catastrophe. Digitized files can be backed up and stored in various locations. Fundraising efforts for the initial phase of the project, with a goal of \$100,000, has already begun.

New Home Page on the World Wide Web—The Historical Committee and Archives of the Mennonite Church now has a presence on the WWW. Thanks to Andres Valtierra, Goshen College student, who accepted the challenge of creating a home page for his history practicum with the Archives. If you have access to the Internet, look for photos of the staff and the Historical Committee, inventory listings, back issues of the Mennonite Historical Bulletin, and a new *Managing Mennonite Memory* view book. Web Site: <http://www.goshen.edu/marchives>.

Transition at MHEP—Carolyn Nolan has ended eight years as director of the Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania. Beth Rice Imchen has been appointed to replace Nolan. Nolan has led MHEP through an era of remarkable growth and expansion. When she was hired in September 1988, the office and museum were located in an old bank building at 24 South Main Street,

Souderton. The library and archives were located in a small room on the campus of Christopher Dock Mennonite High School in Lansdale. Nolan helped guide the planning, funding, and the building of the Meetinghouse on Yoder Road, Harleysville. When the library, archives, museum, and offices were consolidated in the new building, Nolan led the planning for exhibits and new educational programs. On a visit to the MeetingHouse at 569 Yoder Road, one finds ample evidence of her eight years of work.

New director Beth Rice Imchen graduated from Christopher Dock Mennonite High School and Goshen College, where she earned a B.S. in organizational management. She is a member of Doylestown Mennonite Church, where her husband, Toschi, serves as associate pastor.

Menno Simons Exhibit at Kauffman Museum—To celebrate the 500th anniversary of the birth of Menno Simons, the 16th-century Dutch theologian, Kauffman Museum is hosting the special exhibition, *Menno Simons: Image, Art & Identity*. Organized by Keith Sprunger, Bethel College professor of history, the exhibition features seldom displayed art works from the Mennonite Library & Archives, Bethel College. Thirty portraits of Menno, all of which were done after

his lifetime, show him as the hunted dissenter, the pious saint, and the learned scholar. Art produced in the Netherlands from the 17th through 19th centuries demonstrates the attraction of high culture for Dutch Mennonites. In the 20th century, the name and image of Menno are used in both serious and playful ways, such as the "Menno Power" T-shirts.

The grand opening of the exhibit on October 20 drew 135 persons. Dr. Mary Sprunger, assistant professor of history at Eastern Mennonite University, Va., delivered the first lecture on "Mennos, Martyrs & Muppies: The Changing Image of Mennonites in Dutch Art."

Special funding for the Menno exhibit and educational programs was received from the Kansas Humanities Council, the Kansas Arts Commission, Western District Conference Historical Committee, and the late Harry H. Weaver. Negotiations are underway to tour the exhibit at selected museums across the United States and Canada.

MCC Exhibit at Kauffman Museum—For the fourth time in a decade, Kauffman Museum received the Award for Excellence from the Kansas Museums Association, this time for a special exhibition, *The Gift of Hope: The Story of Mennonite Central Committee, 1925-1995*. The award letter noted that "Committee members were impressed with the museum's efforts to create a meaningful exhibit and to reach a diverse audience. The exhibit team is to be commended for their successful efforts to tell a complex story in a clear way, within a relatively small exhibit space. Committee members believe the exhibit to be insightful, innovative, and clearly deserving of recognition." Technical designer and builder Chuck Regier received the award on November 15 at the annual meeting of the Kansas Museums Association.

A New Challenge. A New Project.

Gutenberg to Gigabytes: Mennonite Archives for the 21st Century



A major project to convert paper documents to digital form. This project will

- make research more efficient
- make research possible via the Internet
- increase use of records
- use current technology
- preserve original copies
- decrease on-site storage
- avoid total loss of the collection in the event of a catastrophe
- cost \$100,000.

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

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Goshen, IN 46526
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*Keeping the faith:
"In a society of
change and
progress," the
Amish cling to
their roots.*

Keeping the Faith: Dynamics of the Amish Movement Since the Division of the 1690s

by Roy Kline

Time has a way of clarifying the motivating forces behind a person's words and deeds. To be sensitive about right and wrong motivates one to action. The validity of that motive and action may be measured by its results and the continuity of those results.

We have such an example about 2,400 years ago by the river Ahava.

The issues of right and wrong are what motivated Ezra to take serious measures "to afflict ourselves before God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance" (Ezra 8:21).

Throughout history we find persons who were motivated to similar action at different times over different issues. Time commends history regarding the Swiss Brethren conflict of the 17th century in that

Amish beliefs and practices are well intact even after 300 years. The issues over which the Amish Brethren contended at the time of the division are principles that the Amish church is practicing today. Since that time a number of divisions have occurred within the Amish church over issues that today seem to be no longer significant. One may use the example of the issue of baptizing in a stream that

was cause for national conflict. Today there are no Amish churches that adhere to that practice. The practice of baptizing in a stream had no continuity. This we cannot say of Amish beginnings.

Amish roots run deep due to the nature of the seed sown—the Word of God. I would like to suggest that these roots find their origin in the apostolic church: they have continued through men and women whose minds have been sanctified and influenced by the truth of the Word of God. There is continuity of thought throughout different periods of church history. As the Amish have retained this pattern that they have distinguished themselves from the world. It is this thought pattern that we want to consider in regard to Amish society versus its contemporaries.

Perhaps the quality the Amish are recognized for most by the world is that of making no significant change in a society of change and progress.

The Amish-Mennonite mentality is unique to society in general due to its roots. There is probably no group of people who is so incapable of wisely handling change. Our background has been one of regarding truth in concrete terms. While not all change may have been negative, it does seem that once the Amish-Mennonite mind drops its guard against change, there are hardly any limits to what it is inclined to allow.



Title page of the oldest existing copy of the Schleithem Confession in the Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen, Indiana.

In 1399, 130 Waldenses were found in Bernese territory, the homeland of the Swiss Brethren, and the Amish. In their statement of faith, one of the articles states, "We aim to keep the same faith regardless of growth in numbers." We are not clear on the details of how they accomplished this, but one thing the Waldenses are known for is their memorization of the Scriptures. This practice may have had a significant effect on the church throughout history: it is a characteristic of Amish dynamics. There are probably few

groups who have committed the Bible to memory as have the Amish, even today.

The concern of the New Testament and of such people as the Waldenses, the martyrs of the Reformation, and all God-fearing people since has been to "keep the faith." What it took to realize this concern is what is expressed throughout the history of the church in various aspects. *Keeping the faith* for the Amish historically has meant resisting moderation of principle.

Commitment to conviction ver-

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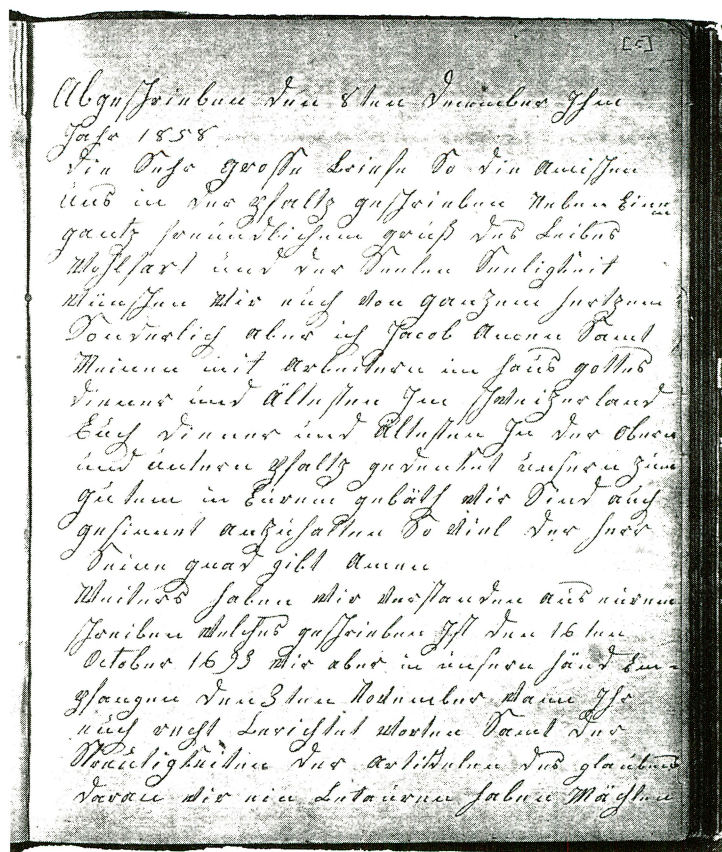
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sus compromise has been a typical Amish concern for centuries. The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, for example, were not given as Ten Suggestions. So, too, men like Jacob Ammann could be very specific.

Considering conditions at the time of the Swiss Brethren controversy, we see this truth in effect. Jacob Ammann and others were intent on relating to the Schleithem Confession of Faith as a reference point in concrete ways as well as to the more recent Dortrecht Confession. Hans Reist regarded the articles as irrelevant or, perhaps, did not regard them at all. This has been a dynamic for the Amish throughout their history, to consider the Scriptures and church standards as concrete and binding. Ammann in principle did not introduce anything new; he merely sought to enact the old, already established truth. This mentality was expressed in earlier Bernese Anabaptists. Delbert Gratz in *Bernese Anabaptists* states that one state authority wrote to another, "The Anabaptist leaders impress us as being more obstinate and headstrong than learned and meek." Considering this, Jacob Ammann may have been a "chip off the old block."

To some of the Swiss Brethren, the conditions of the church indicated that respect for the past and the well-being of the future were at stake. Robert Friedmann in *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries* writes, "Anabaptism was essentially a movement which insisted upon an earnest life of a true discipleship of Christ, that is to give expression in fellowship and love to the deepest Christian faith, with full readiness to suffer in conflict with the evil world order. So long as this willingness to suffer was an expression of deepest faith, and this readiness to enter into a nonresistant struggle for salvation was a reality, just so long was Anabaptism a great and powerful movement." It was this concern that was at the heart of the Swiss



First page of a copybook used by Solomon K. Beiler (1797-1888), an Amish bishop from Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. The book includes hand copied letters of the Amish division, a confession from 1627, a letter from 1864, and Beiler and Hertzler family records.

Brethren conflict.

Issues concerning discipline, church purity, separation, and brotherhood came into the limelight as Swiss Brethren were compromising by taking the oath, baptizing infants, attending state churches, and on occasion sharing communion with them.

To maintain the purity of the church required stricter discipline. Communion held twice a year would give more frequent occasion to realize this goal. There was a need to distinguish more clearly between the church and the world. The ban and shunning would help clarify what belongs to the world and what is of the church. The united commitment as a brotherhood to the truth and the past was threatened. Foot washing according to the example of Christ in John 13, would

revive this sense of responsibility and commitment one to another as well as to God.

We have here three basic articles that the Amish have sought to maintain through the centuries: discipline or church purity, separation, and brotherhood. Paton Yoder writes in *Tradition and Transition*, "Confidence in the spiritual purity and doctrinal integrity of their forefathers' accounts, to a considerable extent, for the respect given to this day to religious customs and traditions by the Amish."

One can further understand some of Ammann's motives and concerns by considering the statements he made in his letters during this time of conflict. In *Letters of the Amish Division: A Source Book*, by John Roth, we have the following statements that reflect a thought

pattern providing the dynamics for the Amish movement:

We also believe in our heart and confess with our mouth that apart from the Word of God no one should be regarded as saved. For then there is no longer only one path that leads to life. There is only one faith that is valid before God, there is only one people who are the bride of Christ. We know well that God saves no one apart from His Word. Without the true saving faith, it is impossible for one to please God. If someone believes from the heart but still does not want to confess with the mouth, then he wants to serve two masters and no one can serve two masters at the same time who are opposed to each other. Our opponents, however want to lead the true hearted people into the heavenly sheepfold by another path without this Christian discipline, without the cross, and without suffering with which the Holy Scriptures are filled. . . . We pay no regard to human councils, to long-standing practice and the custom of time if they are not established according to God's Word. For our faith should be loudly, clearly, firmly, and solely grounded upon God's Word. . . . My highest desire is to maintain order according to the Word of God and Christian discipline. . . . Faith is no respecter of persons. God's Word demands obedience from all people, from the leader as much as from the follower, from the teacher as much as from the listener.

Throughout Amish history, the differences the Amish had with their contemporaries were often not on the doctrines themselves, but where the emphasis was put on those doctrines.

The conflict the Bernese Anabaptists had with the state church was not so much in their lifestyle and conduct but in their theology. Delbert Gratz in *Bernese Anabaptists* writes that one state church minister advised his people "to follow the good example of the Anabaptists in their own life but not to follow their doctrine."

The following discussion will revolve around this concept—how

the Amish have differed traditionally on doctrinal emphasis in relation to pietism.

The Amish church through the years has been affected by pietism. One might say the strength of the Amish has also been their weakness. The effort to maintain practice, form, and structure has been done periodically at the expense of retaining the spirit and principle behind the practice. Historically formalism and spiritual staleness have proven to be seedbeds for pietism.

In *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries*, Robert Friedmann states that the Bernese Oberland, the homeland of the Amish after the 1711 immigration, became a leading pietistic center. This is of interest because we see that after the Amish influence left, pietism took over.

Pietism has been classified as the grandchild of Anabaptism. Historically this conflict of emphasis has been evident. Pietism may be described as being what Schwenkfeld was between Luther and Anabaptism. Pilgrim Marpeck in his writing against Schwenkfeld said, "He wants to look at Christianity only from the pleasant and friendly side." This appears to be a philosophy expressing toleration or moderation of principle.

Following are more definitions of pietism as found in *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries*:

The pietist ceased to place the emphasis upon the outer life, but upon edification, enjoying or "tasting" of salvation which had already been achieved (p. 12). Pietism was the gradual disappearance of that concrete Christianity to an emotional one which caused less conflict with the world. Pietism stressed inherited natural wickedness more than the capacity for obedience, in order to make conversion more effective (p. 137). When religious interests shifted, to be focused mainly on the individual and his eternal destiny, the general style of the Christian life also changed in many aspects (p. 102). The pietist was primarily concerned with inner experience of salvation from a personal position

and only secondarily with expression of brotherhood and not at all on radical world transformation (p. 11).

By these statements one can better understand the difference in emphasis—inward versus outward, individualism versus brotherhood, etc.

We will now consider a number of doctrines where a shift of emphasis is noted:

1. Salvation: It is not simply the certitude of being saved from damnation, but walking in newness of life, and discipleship that has precedence over the concern for experience.

2. Redemption: It is not only deliverance from sin, freedom from guilt and the restoration of fellowship with God, but also a commission to fulfill a task affecting a horizontal as well as a vertical relationship.

3. Grace: It was considered by the biblicists as not merely God's unmerited favor to man in regard to his salvation, but grace is the enabling power of God to do what we ought to and what is right (endowment with responsibility).

4. Justification: It is not only the enjoyment of knowing a right standing with God through faith in Christ, but also an acute awareness that justification cannot be separated from sanctification or holiness. Faith is not complete without works. Justification is the initiation to discipleship.

5. Knowing a right standing with God: Our forefathers believed one could know. In literature and in expression, the emphasis was not so much on this knowledge as it was on the necessity of living and doing right according to the Word of God. This confidence of right relationship with God would be a result.

6. Love: It is not merely an emotional feeling of affection, which overlooks sin and tolerates carnality. Rather it is a mind-set that requires expression in life and conduct according to Christ's words, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

7. Fellowship: It cannot only be a devotional gathering where each one feels himself distinct from the other due to diverse experience. Rather, it is the disappearance of all things personal and selfish in the practice of brotherly reception, to be built up mutually for the building of the kingdom.

8. Communion: Communion is more than a memorial service of Christ's death and resurrection for the personal edification of each participant. It is also a showing of oneness—finding identity by losing it, as shown by the bread and wine, where each kernel and each grape were crushed to make one whole—a unit collectively expressing the will of God. For the Amish, council meetings or preparatory services for communion have always been important events involving due stress and concern. It is the time to reevaluate one's commitment to God and the standards of the church, the visible body of Christ, both individually and collectively. Not only is it an examination of oneself, but it is also a yielding to one's brother or sister for admonition and correction. It is a time to enforce discipline where violation of standard and principle exist. This


has been the Amish approach for maintaining the church collectively and individually versus the more Protestant approach of revival meetings.

9. The church: The biblical concept of the church has been the very center of Amish dynamics. It has been the primary point for Anabaptist-Protestant distinction. Understanding the church to be a covenanted community has affected the degree of loyalty to the visible body of Christ. It is in a very real sense the kingdom of God on earth. The church, as God's people, collectively expresses the will of God on earth in life and conduct. It is the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

10. Eschatology: The emphasis is not focusing on outward world conditions as the determining factors for Christ's second return to earth, but an acute awareness that it is the church, the salt of the earth, that determines God's decision for the end. This in return is reason to be concerned about the danger of apostasy and drifting away from truth. The Amish traditionally have understood that the return of Christ is imminent and that the return will be the end of the world. There will

be time no more. The final and last judgment will then take place when each one must reap what was sown and must give account of himself to God for the things done in the body, whether good or bad.

Whenever Amish brethren have deviated too far from the proper emphasis on the above doctrines, they individually or as a group have ceased to be a congenial part of Amish society. Along with the shift of emphasis, there has also been a shift of fellowship.

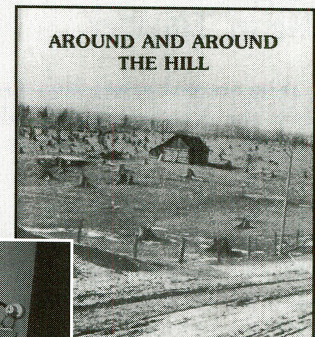
In summary, one might say the dynamics of the Amish movement are those matters that contribute to *keeping the faith* in not allowing moderation of principle as held forth in the Word of God and, as has been proven workable throughout the past, with a proper emphasis on right relationship with God and man as well as purity, separation, and brotherhood. 

—Roy Kline is an Amish minister in Holmes County, Ohio. This is the text of a talk he presented at the annual meeting of the Casselman River Amish and Mennonite Historians, September 3, 1994, Grantsville, Maryland.

Correction:

Oren Detweiler of Fairview, Michigan, did not write a biographical sketch of his longtime friend Ora Troyer, as reported on page 3 of the October 1996 *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*. He did, however, write an autobiographical sketch of his life and family entitled *Around and Around the Hill*. "The Hill" refers to where Detweiler's father built their new home at Fairview, Michigan, in 1907. This book was published in the 1980s and includes some pictures. It is 74 pages in length.

Detweiler was born on December 24, 1897, at West Liberty, Ohio. In May 1907, when he was nine years old, he moved with his family to Fairview, Michigan. His parents were Samuel W. and Malinda (Kauffman) Detweiler. Detweiler still resides in Fairview, Michigan, and is 99 1/2 years old. He is pictured here with his son, Lowell Detweiler.



by
Oren Detweiler

Martyrs' Mirror or Bloody Theater?

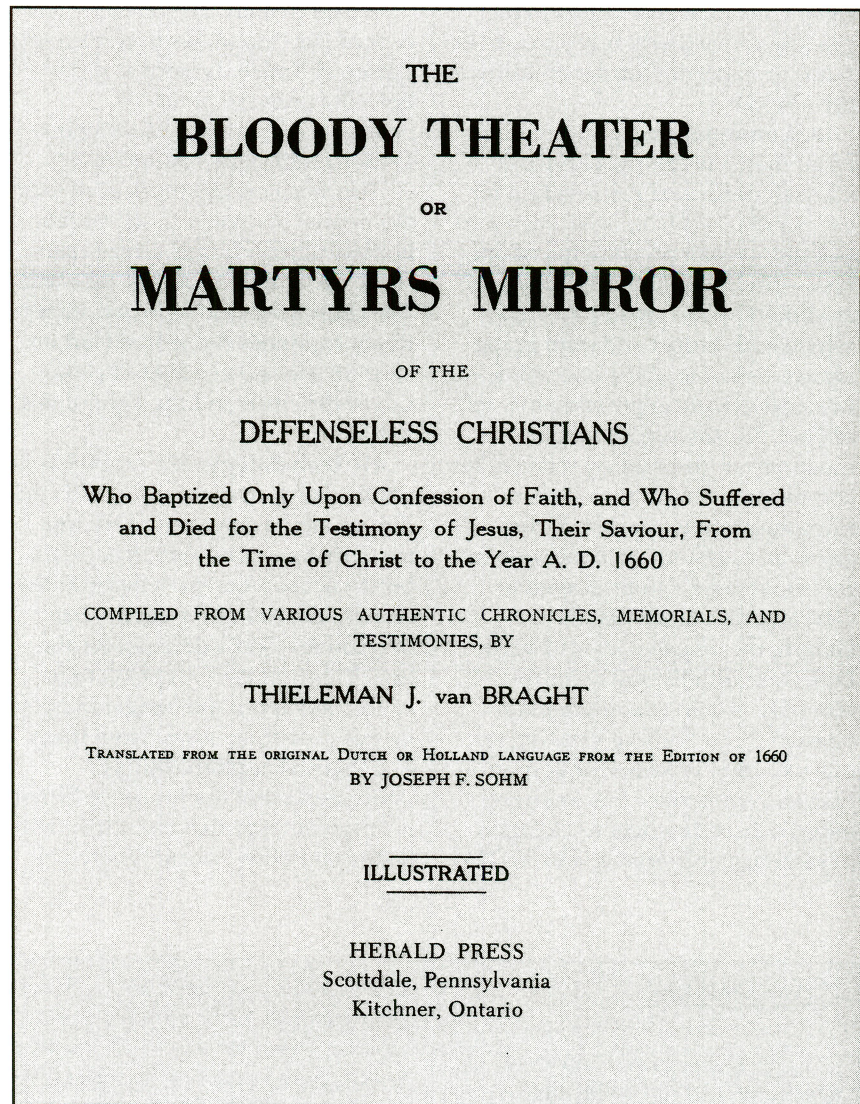
by James W. Lowry

Martyrs' Mirror has these two names on its title page: *The Bloody Theater* and *Martyrs' Mirror*. We could set up a diagram of the two titles, where *bloody* would correspond to *martyrs* and *theater* to *mirror*, showing that the two titles are roughly equivalent. *Bloody* and *martyrs* both refer to the suffering of Christians, and *theater* and *mirror* refer to the means by which the sufferings are portrayed.

Both *theater* and *mirror* could imply a question about how truth can be expressed. How do we portray reality accurately? It is a question about the sign (*signum*) versus the thing (*res*) which the sign expresses. We will deal with that question after some preliminary discussion. The main question is as follows: Why do we usually call the book *Martyrs' Mirror* rather than *Bloody Theater*? *Bloody* is an unpleasant word, but is that enough to account for our decided preference for *Martyrs' Mirror* when speaking about the book?

Origin of the Use of *Theater*

Who started using the word *theater* in the title, and what could be the justification? Theater and play-acting have no favorable mention in the Old or New Testaments¹ although such forms of entertainment existed among the Greeks of that time. The closest approach to Greek theater might be found in the two books of Maccabees when they mention the "place of exercise,"² or gymnasium, built by the hellenizing Jews at Jerusalem with the permission of Antiochus Epiphanes. At such a place where men stripped themselves to exercise and compete in the Greek fashion, there could be



The first English edition of Martyrs' Mirror was published at Lampeter Square, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and was translated from the German language. The third edition was published in 1886 in Elkhart, Indiana. This edition is a translation from the original Dutch-language edition of 1660. All subsequent editions have used this translation.

exercisers and observers, although the emphasis was on doing the exercise. Of course, a theater is not a gymnasium, but there are some similarities.

The authors of both 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees, despite their great differences of viewpoint, strenuously objected to the gymnasium at

Jerusalem. Second Maccabees 4:17 comments on this matter, "For it is not a light thing to do wickedly against the laws of God." First Maccabees 1:15 says that those who participated "sold themselves to do mischief." Traditionally, one might say Mennonites have viewed theater, and entertainment in general,

as "mischief."

Again, can there be any justification for the use of the word *theater* in the title *Bloody Theater*? Two Scriptures come to mind. The Christians are "a gazingstock"³ and "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men."⁴ Actors, of course, present themselves to be gazed at and deliberately become spectacles.

In the days of the Roman Empire, Christians were taken to the amphitheater by their pagan persecutors and put on view for the entertainment of hardened crowds who came to watch their execution. Although they were on display in an amphitheater, the Christians were not acting or attempting to entertain anyone. They were simply living out a life of obedience to God; this unfortunately brought them into the midst of a curious, sensation-seeking crowd. For the unbelievers it became theater, but for the Christians it was a matter of being and doing, of faithfulness. It was not a matter of portraying reality. It was reality.

Let's go back to the question the two titles could raise about how truth can be expressed. What is the difference between *theater* and *mirror*? Could we say it is a matter of the difference between art and truth, *theater* being art and *mirror* being truth? Neither theater nor the mirror is a direct experience of reality. Both include the interposition of a human device, on the one hand an artistically created play and on the other hand a glass specially polished or silvered to reflect whatever appears before it. It seems that a play is a *signum*—portrayal—further removed from *res*—reality—since events pass through a human mind and are organized by the subjectivity of that mind and by the literary conventions of society for playwriting and acting. The mirror, on the other hand, merely gives back what comes before it. Both play and mirror are at least one step removed from reality, but the play seems further removed.

The Changing Names of the Martyr Books

To further consider *theater* versus *mirror*, let's look at the history of the different names of the martyr book. When was the word *theater* first used? When was the word *mirror* first used?

The Anabaptist martyrology was originally called *Het Offer des Heeren* (The Sacrifice of the Lord) and that name continued in all the editions down through 1599.⁵ After that, the name began changing.

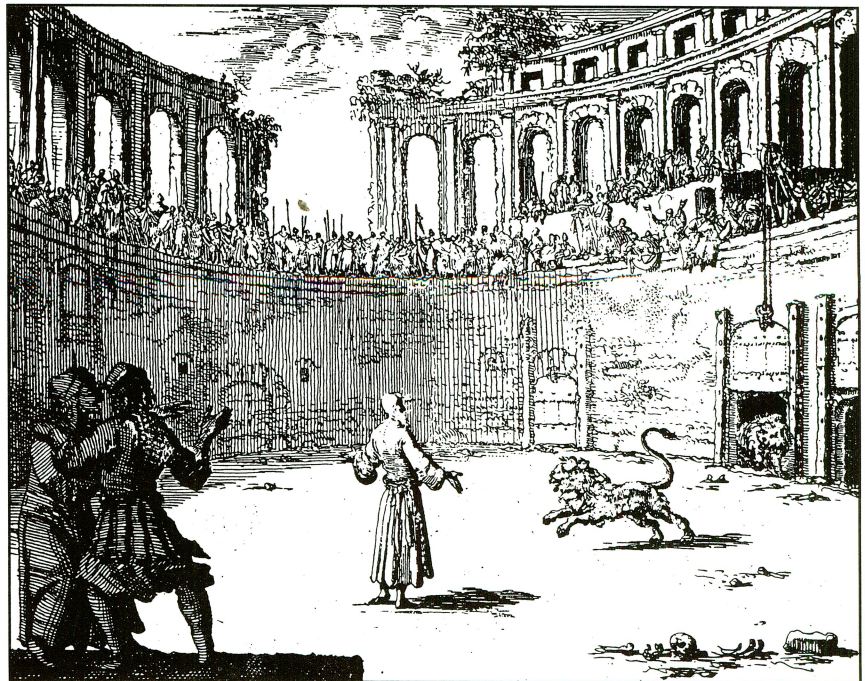
Below is a list of the dates and the new names given (in English translation):

- 1615 *History of the Martyrs or True Witnesses of Jesus Christ*
- 1617 *History of the True Witnesses of Jesus Christ; Who Declared in Manifold Sufferings and Sealed with Their Blood the Evangelical Truth*
- 1626 *History of the Pious Witnesses of Jesus Christ, Who Declared in Manifold Sufferings the Evangelical Truth*
- 1631 *Martyrs' Mirror of the Defenseless Christians*

- 1660 *The Bloody Theater of the Baptism-Minded and Defenseless Christians, Who for the Testimony of Jesus Have Suffered and Were Slain . . . Being an Enlargement of the Earlier Martyrs' Mirror*
- 1685 *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs' Mirror of the Baptism-Minded or Defenseless Christians*

Notice that *Martyrs' Mirror* first appears in the title in 1631. Notice also that van Braght himself first used *Bloody Theater* as a name for the martyr book in 1660. He felt that his use of this name was obvious and said that the book was "a representation or exhibition of the blood, suffering, and death of those who, for the testimony of Jesus Christ, and for their conscience' sake, shed their blood exchanging their life for a cruel death."⁶ The name *Bloody Theater* did originate with van Braght, but he gave no further explanation of the use of the word *theater*.

In the 1660 edition van Braght moved the words *Martyrs' Mirror* far down the page and so de-emphasized them. The 1660 edition



The Bloody Theater: artist Jan Luyken's depiction of Ignatius, a student under John, who was devoured by wild animals in Rome, A.D. 111.



Two young ladies executed in the bishopric of Bamberg in 1550: "They may look on me and take a mirror [example] from me, all who live the word of the Lord."

was the only edition he produced.

By 1685 van Braght was dead, and the editors of that year's edition moved the words *Martyrs' Mirror* up the page to second place, where they have continued in each edition to the present.

Origins of the Use of Mirror

Let's go back in time to consider how the word *mirror* became part of the title of the Anabaptist martyr book.

The seeds from which the mirror metaphor in the title grew lie in several statements in the Apocrypha and the New Testament. Always the mirror is an instrument of revelation; sometimes the stress lies on the revelation, and sometimes the stress is on its indirectness. One of the books of the Apocrypha, stressing the idea of revelation, speaks of wisdom and says, "For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God."⁷ This seems to have influenced Paul when he speaks in 2 Corinthians 3:18 of Christians as

seeing the glory of the Lord in a mirror and being transformed by that view of God. Paul, using the same metaphor but stressing indirectness, says that the spiritual knowledge of this present life is like the dim perception of images in a mirror in 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a (looking) glass darkly."

Going back to the stress on revelation, the writer in James 1:23-25 speaks of the Christian law of liberty as a mirror. He says the obedient disciple keeps looking into that mirror and retains the image of what he ought to be in his soul.

When we look into a literal mirror, we see ourselves as we are rather than as we ought to be. We need another image for what we ought to be. We can get that from a figurative mirror, from the Word of God with its picture of Jesus.

From such biblical seeds, an Anabaptist use of the mirror metaphor grew in two of Menno Simons' writings, both produced around 1537. In his writing on the new birth, Menno said non-Christians ought to let Jesus Christ

with his Spirit and Word be their example and mirror. In his meditation on the 25th psalm, he said those who know God "view their consciences in the clear mirror of Thy [God's] wisdom." Wisdom here is either the same as Christ or the Word of God in a probable allusion to both Wisdom of Solomon 7:26 and James 1:23-25.⁸

Menno's statements, as well as the Scriptures, may have influenced Lijsken Dircks, wife of Jerome Segers, of whom we read in the *Martyrs' Mirror*. A prisoner in Antwerp in 1551, she was being led after a hearing through a crowded public place. She said to the guards who were trying to shove the people away from her: "They may look on me and take a mirror (*spiegel* = mirror = example) from me, all who live the word of the Lord." In the margin the author of the account gives a reference to Philippians 3:17, interpreting Lijsken's remark to mean that she gives herself as an example (mirror) of what happens to those who follow the Word of God. *L*

—James W. Lowry, a former teacher, is currently a reference librarian in Frederick, Maryland. He has recently written *The Martyrs' Mirror Made Plain*, a study guide and handbook.

Endnotes

1. Acts 19:29 mentions a theater at Ephesus as the place where Paul's traveling companions were mistreated.
2. King James Version.
3. *Ein Schauspiel*. Heb. 10:33. *Schauspiel* is the German word for "play" or "theater."
4. *Ein Schauspiel geworden der Welt und den Engeln und den Menschen*. 1 Cor. 4:9. Gazingstock and spectacle are both *Schauspiel* in the German translation.
5. The editions of *Het Offer des Heeren* appeared in 1562, 1566, 1567, 1570, 1578 (twice), 1580, 1590, 1592, 1595, and 1599.
6. *Martyrs' Mirror*, p. 16. On pages 12 and 13, he mentions in passing that the heroes of ancient times "among the heathen" were honored by presentations of their lives "in public theaters."
7. Wisd. of Sol. 7:26.
8. *Complete Writings* by Menno Simons (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), pp. 96, 75.



The original Prairie Street meetinghouse was constructed in 1871. This photo includes the additions made in 1895 and 1901. The building was destroyed by fire in 1935, and a new brick churchhouse was built on the same site at 1316 Prairie Street, Elkhart, Indiana.

An Anniversary Celebration Notebook

by John Bender

Stop. Look. Listen. That's what Prairie Street Mennonite Church did in celebrating 125 years as a prelude to crossing the threshold to a faithful future.

Our 125th Anniversary Committee started work in November 1995, and the rest, as the saying goes, is history.

The committee, Dorsa J. Mishler (chair), Mary Mishler, Russell Krabill, and John Bender (secretary), worked for a year in planning the celebration, held throughout November 1996.

Here's how we went about planning, taking account of audience, message and media:

We identified our main *audiences* as current participants, former participants, and the three congregations planted by Prairie Street. We also identified secondary audiences.

What *message*, or underlying theme or idea, did we want to communicate? In the minutes we noted, "Whatever the message angle, it should look forward, accentuating our strengths and purpose. The reason for celebrating the past means we want the best of our past and present to be incarnated in the future."

We selected as overall theme, *I will build my church* (Matt. 16: 18), and related themes for Music Sunday, Homecoming Weekend, Mission Sunday, and Challenge Sunday. We were richly rewarded as congregational and guest resource persons shaped the messages of praise, reflection, outreach, and prayer.

The anniversary message was also conveyed through a historical quilt and a book, both telling the church's story from 1871-1996. Supplementing these activities and projects were meals, displays, chil-

dren's stories, and a walk through the church.

The *media* we used to publicize our plans included five-minute Moments in History each month in 1996 leading up to the celebration, fundraising for expenses, news in local and church publications, a photo wall that featured all current members as well as historical photos, an invitational brochure sent to 584 households of former members who had left since 1950, a feature story in *The Elkhart Truth*, outside banner, church newsletter updates, and other publicity.

The anniversary committee met 21 times for two hours each during the year. "Animated" more than any other word describes the committee. We felt the church's support financially, in volunteer tasks, loan of historical materials, and most of all in becoming engaged with the theme. The first Sunday of our fundraising event, we exceeded our



(Above) The Disciples Sunday School Class meeting in the Fellowship Hall. Russell Krabill, former pastor of Prairie Street Mennonite Church and Indiana-Michigan conference historian, is standing; (Right) John F. Funk (1835-1930), bishop and first minister of Prairie Street Mennonite Church.



goal by \$1.25. We had asked for contributions in multiples from \$1.25 to \$125.

The anniversary gave us a prime opportunity to look to and highlight our head, Jesus, the one who builds the church. In that light we reviewed our beginning and growth, the development of organizations and institutions that were given birth among us, and our contribution to our community and to the church worldwide. We spent almost as much time looking forward as looking back. Our worship services at the start of 1997 are building on the richly satisfying and challenging celebration experience to further discover the message God has for us.

Because the history of our church reaches so far afield, the committee sent copies of our history book to all Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church college and seminary libraries, as well as to GCMC and Mennonite

Brethren archives in Canada and the United States. We also gave complimentary copies of the history book to the three churches that were started by Prairie Street. (Copies are available at the church for \$10; \$12 by mail).

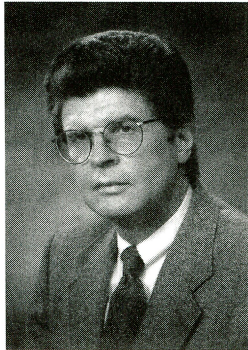
The committee assembled a resource file of the extensive reference material we collected and wrote for the history book. Only a fraction could be used in the book. A copy of this file will be available in binder form in our church library and another in the Mennonite Archives. The 150th anniversary committee will know what to do with it!

Minnie Graber provided the lead into our 126th year with the prayer of blessing at the final meeting. Concluding, she prayed, "Dear Father, lead us in the days ahead. Help us to give priority to the important. Guide us in the problems that arise. Preserve the unity of

the Prairie Street Church. We want to love you more and love our brothers and sisters fervently, for love is the greatest. Keep us diligent in the care and teaching of our precious children. May our youth mature in their training. Give them visions of service in your kingdom. You have given us the mandate to go into all the world and tell the good news. Help us to trust and obey in carrying out your commands. Bless and prosper all who are engaged in kingdom business. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom, the power and the glory."

Book Review

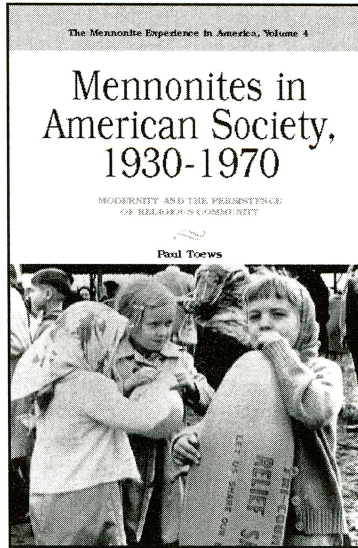
Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970: Modernity and the Persistence of Religious Community. By Paul Toews. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1996. (The Mennonite Experience in America, vol. 4.). Paper. \$19.95 (Canada, \$28.50).



Author Paul Toews

To chronicle for the first time, and then to interpret diverse groups at odds with one another in culture and dress, in doctrine and theology, is no insignificant task. Paul Toews accepted that mandate when he agreed to write a volume on the Mennonite experience in America from the 1920s into the 1970s.

To do justice to the tensions inherent in such diversity, Toews developed a typology, describing and then comparing the "traditionalists" (the "Old Orders," et al.) with the "progressives" (General Conference Mennonites being the best example) (p. 33). Toews finds common ground and vision among all Amish and Mennonite groups, centering in "the notion of the kingdom of God being incarnated in human forms in all ages of history," that it "should be recognizable and distinguishable from the kingdoms of this world," and that "the church, not secular structures, is God's main agent for bringing forth and demonstrating God's kingdom." Toews then contrasts the two: "What is dif-



ferent is how Old Orders and their modernizing cousins try to embody these ideas" (292).

Toews is fair and sympathetic in his analysis and interpretation of all Mennonite groups (the Amish generally acknowledge their faith to be "Mennonite"). All groups have a valid *raison d'être*, although Toews does wrestle with and challenge some of them occasionally, as we shall see, using the Anabaptist Vision as a yardstick.

How does one write a first-time book based on millions of unpublished documents and hundreds of secondary sources? Paul Toews has done it well, choosing the thematic route of history of ideas, rather than a pure social-historical methodology. He justifies the inclusion of the many groups at the outset, opening the first chapter with a description of the close cooperation among several larger Mennonite groups already at hand in 1930, the *terminus a quo* of the volume. The author also dips into Anabaptist history, setting modern Mennonitism within its larger religious context, anticipating the story that unfolds in the 13 chapters in the volume.

Early on the volume shifts from a more obvious social-historical methodology to a purer history-of-ideas approach; from the study of a movement, congregationally and denominationally, to ideas and dif-

fering points of view (in later chapters) held by a few, select leaders.

The volume follows a natural progression from an analysis of the theological and ideological structures in the 1930s, to the successful attempts of such leaders as Harold S. Bender (*The Anabaptist Vision*) to bring a high degree of resolution to the debate, in a manner that helped meet the new demands of World War II upon Mennonitism in general. The next set of chapters charts the transformations caused by World War II, leading to deeper ties and interrelationships among many Mennonite groups, suggesting the possibility of closer structural ties. A separate chapter on the Old Orders follows; it is justified thematically because of the widening cultural-social gulf between the Old Orders and the more progressive groups, especially after the 1960s. A final chapter discusses the impact of the Vietnam War on Mennonites. Toews closes his last chapter by noting the seminal and brilliant work of John H. Yoder, centering on his volume *The Politics of Jesus*. Toews says, "If Yoder's book was appealing beyond Mennonite circles, it also offered a powerful reminder to Mennonites who were rapidly losing their distinct sociology. Like Hershberger and Bender before him, Yoder still offered Mennonites a middle ground. That ground lay between being a marginal people, existing only on society's fringes, and becoming merely a part of a modern society, which was adept at undermining prophetic sects by folding them into the approved, established order. Messianic communities should and could be powerful instruments of witness. If they were, they would keep their distinct peoplehood" (335-336).

Toews' bias is that of a sympathetic interpreter, combined with the historian's perspective; the era under consideration is set within the larger Anabaptist-Mennonite context of the generations and centuries that preceded. In this regard,

for example, Toews chronicles, in the thought and writings of a number of Mennonites from the 1930s and 1940s, major discrepancies between their supposed Mennonite theology, and the longer-standing Anabaptist-Mennonite historical tradition. In the author's words, "not only were Mennonites caught between conservatism and liberalism; even more, they had not articulated a theological system appropriate to their history and position in society. Protestant Fundamentalism and liberalism were both alien to them" (78). Toews then describes how certain Mennonites dealt with Fundamentalism, especially from the 1920s through the 1940s or so, and how, slowly but surely, a new vision took hold, through the efforts of C. Henry Smith, Harold S. Bender, Guy F. Hershberger, J. Winfield Fretz, John B. Toews, and others.

This is a noble and brave book. The author discovers the underlying faith and love that permeated a people, allowing at the same time for keen imperfections to surface. Toews believes in the power of idea, in the genuineness and power of the Anabaptist Vision: "In the 1940s, Mennonites' greatest intellectual achievement—Harold Bender's 'Anabaptist Vision'—was a response to an identity crisis. Bender had sought an intellectual and ancestral home for a people bewildered by rapid social change. . . . Harold Bender's Anabaptist Vision . . . was the crowning achievement of twentieth-century ideological reconstruction of Mennonite identity" (339, 341).

The volume ends on a note of hope, suggesting we're in this Mennonite thing together, that for the post-1970s, it is largely up to us to determine how the story is to continue. Furthermore, that vision continues to play an important role in our denominational health. Toews sees two major types of Mennonites emerging during the half-century he was interpreting, beginning around 1930: the Old

Order groups, continuing in large part their societal separation from the outside world, and the progressive Mennonites, working at "preserving community via new denominational structures, ideological formulas, and ecumenical alliances" (342). Toews sees both strategies working, at least into the 1970s.

Critique. The reader may wonder why the volume includes only Mennonites living in the United States. The geographical limits were set when the series was planned, in deference to Canadian scholars eager to write about the Canadian experience. This decision permitted a more natural correlation of the inner Mennonite community with the outer societal and political context: that is especially significant during a war. However, such imposed limits truncate the larger Mennonite reality of being a presence, separate from the state, a reality that knows no national borders; this is shown in Mennonite conferences such as the Northwest Conference of the Mennonite Church that exists on both sides of the border.

Worthy of note, given current discussions on the significance of differing church polities for the idea of merger, are the tensions that often were at play between congregational authority and a more centralized, authoritative leadership, and the role institutionalism played in this regard. Toews asks "how to structure both congregations and conferences." He answers it in part by quoting sociologist Paul Peachey, who maintained that Swiss and Dutch Anabaptists had "consistently thought in congregational terms," and that the modern building of central Mennonite institutions brought with it a loss of inner vitality (230-231).

Toews shows an unusually good understanding of key leaders such as Bender, Hershberger, and Orie O. Miller (individuals whom this reviewer knew personally). We assume that Toews did equally well in portraying General Conference

Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren leaders, et al. However, more could have been said about the influence Robert Friedmann held upon Bender in the defining of the Anabaptist Vision.

There is a problem with using "district" for regional Mennonite conferences. Although "district" may be apropos for some groups, it is not adequate in describing the Mennonite Church tradition. More also could have been said about the Hutterites. Although there is reason to view them in a different light than, say, the Amish, they too are part of the Mennonite World Conference tradition. The communal house church movement of the 1950s deserves greater emphasis than it got in this volume. The photographs in the volume lack sparkle, although the binding and paper are good. On page 319 and following, more could have been said about Hershberger's shift in the 1960s in his views concerning taking the message of peace and social justice to Washington, D.C.

From the many volumes published each year, a few will emerge as classics. This magnum opus promises to become one such classic, with substance, carefully selected, written with intelligent respect and fairness for the range of Mennonite groups, tied together with obvious vision. Toews possesses the amazing ability to bring clarity to his work, in spite of the myriad facts. He is aware of, and does justice to, the general contextual literature "out there," not only to the Mennonite story in the narrower sense.

With balance, trust, and goodwill, Toew's completed "patchwork quilt" is believable; it impels the reader to recommit to the same vision of the human response of discipleship, fulfilled in a close interrelating community with an eye for love and peace—our ongoing vision, now centuries in the making.

—Leonard Gross

News and Notes

Smithsonian Picks Kidron to Host Barn Again!—It seems to be a rather unlikely marriage, Kidron, Ohio, and Washington, D.C., but that is exactly what has happened. The Smithsonian Institute has selected the Kidron-Sonnenberg Heritage Center as one of only four sites in Ohio to host a traveling exhibit called Barn Again! This exhibit will go to only four states in 1997 and four states in 1998 with four sites in each state selected to host the exhibit. That puts Kidron in a fairly select group. Barn Again! will be on display at the center from July 23 until September 7, 1997. [Kidron Community Historical Society Newsletter, vol. 9, issue 1, January 1997, p. 1]

Public Honor for Pacifists—On October 26, a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission marker was unveiled outside the Friends Center in Philadelphia, recognizing the many members of "historic peace churches" and other COs, who served in the Civilian Public Service program during World War II and the immediate post-war years. The American Friends Service Committee, one of the agencies involved in the origination of the CPS program, hosted a dedication service attended by more than 35 participants and their spouses from Quaker, Mennonite, Brethren, Methodist, and Catholic backgrounds. [Fellowship, vol. 63, no. 1-2, January/February 1997, p. 24]

Ohio Amish Library, Inc. Moves to New Facility—In the fall of 1996, Ohio Amish Library, Inc. (OAL) moved into its new building located on TR 369 just south of the old site. It is a two-story building with the library in the lower level, and a meeting room upstairs. On Saturday, Nov. 30, we held an open house that was well attended.

Approximately 150 people saw the new facility with around 80 people present at a short introductory program at 1:00 p.m. Many people expressed interest in using the library and quite a few took memberships to OAL. The books are in two groups; the original collection of historical, genealogical, and research volumes of Ohio Amish Library, which now numbers 1,083 books; and the Simeon Cleophas Library, a collection of 6,250 research and reference volumes given to OAL by Christian Printing Missions and William McGrath. So OAL now has around 7,350 books with several thousand more coming from the McGrath collection. The library is open on Saturdays, and on weekdays by request. We invite and encourage you to visit and use the library and to write about your studies or research!

[Ohio Amish Library Newsletter, no. 11, February 1997, p. 1]

Ohio Amish Translate Ausbund Hymns—A group of Amish men from Holmes County, Ohio, have been working for some time in translating the German hymns in this Anabaptist hymnal into English. The Ohio Amish Library board members, from the Old Order Amish, New Order Amish, and Beachy Amish groups, are currently meeting every two weeks to work on this large project. They are concentrating on the songs actually sung in the Amish church services; they may publish these in a separate publication within a year. Later the entire volume may also be published.

The February 1993 issue of *Heritage Review*, the annual publication of the Ohio Amish Library, contains three of these songs of many stanzas written by or about early Anabaptists: hymn numbers 19, 87, and 101. [Daniel E. Hochstetler, *MAH's News and Notes*, vol. VI, no. 1, Spring 1997, p. 2]

Bethaus, Meetinghouse, Church—This is the name of an international conference on the architecture of Anabaptist-Mennonite worship spaces and places to be held October 16-18, 1997 at The MeetingHouse, Harleysville, Pennsylvania. Church historians, architects, art and architectural historians, anthropologists, and theologians will explore the basis for a distinctive Anabaptist-Mennonite architecture of worship and meeting.

The event is sponsored by the Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust and the Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania. For more information, contact PO Box 82, 565 Yoder Road, Harleysville, PA 19438; 215-256-3020; e-mail: mennhist@pond.com. [*MHEP Newsletter*, vol. 24, no. 2, March 1997, p. 10]

The Riddle of Things Past was a conference for pastors, teachers, and conference historians, featuring *The Strains of Zion's Harmony*, a musical drama by John Ruth, and *The Mennonite Experience in America Series*. The event was held May 9-10, 1997 at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.

Speakers included John L. Ruth, Richard MacMaster, and Al Keim. Seminar offerings included training for congregational historians, resourcing for pastors and teachers, raising funds, using *The Mennonite Experience in America Series* for preaching and teaching, using computers for genealogy and records management, history as healer, and writing congregational histories.

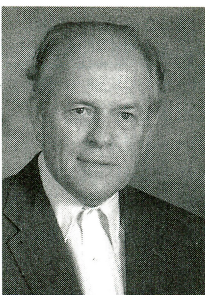
A 5:00 dinner (Friday) featured John Ruth's keynote address titled *The Riddle of Things Past*. At 7:30 *The Strains of Zion's Harmony* was presented by a cast of singers and actors from Franconia Conference. At 2:15 p.m., a panel of speakers and seminar leaders explored the theme of finding humor in our history.

The Mennonite Experience in

America (MEA) Series of four volumes was offered at a special discount price of \$16. Costs for the entire event, or for various parts, were as follows: Conference registration—\$25; drama tickets only—\$8; dinner and drama tickets—\$15; total package (conference, dinner, and drama)—\$35.

The conference was being sponsored by the Virginia Mennonite Conference Historical Committee, the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians, the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church (Goshen, Ind.) and Eastern Mennonite University.

The Strains of Zion's Harmony looks at why two main conference affiliations exist among eastern Pennsylvania Mennonites, by listening to them converse and sing in 1844, three years before a split occurred. Lancaster and Virginia



John L. Ruth, conference speaker and co-writer of The Strains of Zion's Harmony

events are woven into the story by visitors from Lancaster County, Pa., and Singers Glen, Va.

Arranger/director Bill Gottshall of Souderton uses music of the 19th century, including tunes composed locally, to draw viewers into the emotions of the era. A graduate of Berklee College of Music in 1978, Bill was assistant to the music director of the Tony Award-winning Broadway Musical, *My One and Only* and was instrumental in the production of the new hymnal of the United Church of Christ. He is owner of Northeast Music Service, a

company creating music for radio, TV, video, and industrial films.

John L. Ruth of Lower Salford has written/produced 30 films and videos on Mennonite history. His book on the Franconia and Eastern District Mennonite Conferences, *Maintaining the Right Fellowship*, was published in 1984, and his *The Earth Is the Lord's: A Narrative History of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference* is expected from the press soon.

The drama was presented at Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, Lansdale, Pa., March 20 and 21; and at Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, Lancaster, Pa., April 4 and 5; Marion Mennonite Church, Chambersburg, Pa., May 8; and at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., May 9, 1997. The musical drama was presented to sell-out crowds in Harleysville, Pa., in December 1996.

Correction to "New Treasures: Archives of the Mennonite Church" in the January 1997 issue.

The children of the Ira S. and Elizabeth (Rickert) Johns family were incorrectly identified in the January 1997 *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*. To the right is the correct identification.

The photograph was taken around 1924, the same year Ira S. Johns was ordained preacher at the Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana. Johns had been converted at the first series of meetings which D. D. Miller conducted, some time in the 1890s. Johns was ordained deacon in 1909 and was chosen by lot. In 1924, the Indiana-Michigan district mission board



Back row (l-r): Vivian, Vera, Vesta, and Miriam; Middle row (l-r): Mary, Elizabeth Johns, Daniel, Ira S. Johns, Pauline; Front row: Galen

requested that Johns be ordained preacher and that he be available to be sent wherever he was needed. But the Clinton Frame congregation subsequently requested that he remain there and serve them as a minister. He was a strong conference man and

served as its secretary for 29 years. He was much concerned for the welfare of the church and deeply burdened that the church should not drift into worldliness.

(Continued on page 16)

Recent Publications

Ammon, Richard I., Sr., *Our Family Tree : An Ammon-Shirk Genealogy*. Lancaster, PA: Published by author, 1993. 65 pp. \$20. Order from author: 1913 Harclay Pl, Lancaster, PA 17601.

Beachy, Ezra, *Family Record of Jonas S. Beachy and Fannie Miller*. Goshen, IN: Published by Ezra Beachy and Bertha Barbara Beachy. 177 pp. plus index. Order from: Paton Yoder, 1608 S 14th St, Goshen, IN 46526.

Beachy, William V. and Betty K., *The Descendants of Abraham B. Beachy & Elizabeth Miller of Holmes County, Ohio*. Baltimore, MD: Published by authors, 1995. 136 pp. Order from authors: 9217 Lamaze Rd, Baltimore, MD 21234-3413.

Beachy, William V. and Betty K., *"Strong" John Beachy and His Descendants*. Decorah, IA: The Anundsen Publishing Company, 1995. 211 pp. Order from authors: Springs Historical Society, Springs, PA 15562.

Berkey, Rev. William Albert (deceased) and Ruth Berkey Reichley, *The Berkey Book*. Arlington, VA: Published by Ruth Berkey Reichley, 1995. 992 pp. \$30. Order from publisher: 2939 N Nottingham St, Arlington, VA 22207.

Burkhardt, Mary, *Descendants of Adam Z. Martin & Emma M. Weaver*. Lancaster, PA: Published by author, 1990. 47 pp. Order from author: 1417 Mission Rd, Lancaster, PA 17601.

Carlisle Printing, *Descendants of Benjamin J. Yoder and Fannie I. Yoder 1880-1995*. Walnut Creek, OH: Carlisle Printing, 1995. 52 pp. Order from: Marvin Wengard, Carlisle Printing.

Chase, Mary Kinsinger, *Bertsche Family*. Portland, IN: Published by author, 1987. Order from author: 503 W High St, Portland, IN 47371.

Chase, Mary Kinsinger, *Christian Garber History*. Portland, IN: Published by author, 1996. Order from author: 503 W High St, Portland, IN 47371.

Chase, Mary Kinsinger, *Johannes Kinsinger Genealogy*. Portland, IN: Published by author, 1996. Order from author: 503 W High St, Portland, IN 47371.

Chase, Mary Kinsinger, *John Nafziger History*. Portland, IN: Published by author, 1996. Order from author: 503 W High St, Portland, IN 47371.

Close, Betty Stover, *Stover Genealogy Replacement Pages 2-27-96*. Centreville, MI: Published by author, 1996. Order from author: 62764 Kuhlmeier Rd, Centreville, MI 49032.

Daum, Robert, *The Descendants of David Kauffman in America*. Wilmington, DE: Published by author. 24 pp. Order from author: 1223 Heather Ln, Wilmington, DE 19803.

Eshelman, Grace R., *The Jacob L. Eschleman and Adaline Shelly Ancestors and Related Families*. Lancaster, PA: Published by author, 1995. 104 pp. Order from author: 34 Springhouse Rd, Lancaster, PA 17603-0620.

Eshelman, John B., *Descendants of John William & Barbara Ann Eshelman*. Lancaster, PA: Published by author, 1996. 38 pp. Order from author: 26 Deer Ford Dr, Lancaster, PA 17601.

Friesen, Abe, *Peter Friesen and Maria Rempel Descendants 1828-1994*. Steinbach, MB: Published by author, 1994. Order from author: Box 1322, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0.

Friesen, Bert with John Schoenfeld and Anne Ens Schoenfeld, *Faith-Hope-Love: Schoenfeld-Ens*. Winnipeg, MB: Dunvegan Pub (Bert Friesen), 1994. Pp. 221. Order from: Bert Friesen.

Goossen, Victor, *Franz Froese 91825-1913)-Anna Braun (1844-1908) Family Register*. S Rosenort, MB: Prairie View Press, 1994. 320 pp. Order from author: Box 160, Rosenort, MB R0G 1W0.

Hassan, Hazel Nice, *One Man's Family: Descendants of Daniel H. Deter (1852-1943) and His Wife Elsie Steiner (1859-1938)*. Goshen, IN: Published by author, 1996. 135 pp. Order from author: 19549 CR 38, Goshen, IN 46526.

Headings, Daniel J. and Saloma R., *Headings' History, Happenings, and Genealogy*. Buffalo, MO: Published by authors, 1996. 426 pp. \$27.25. Order from authors: Rt 1, Box 336, Buffalo, MO 65622.

Hershberger, Samuel B., *Descendants of Samuel D. Miller and Mattie L. Bontrager 1876-1994*. Topeka, IN: DieaBlatt, 1994. 26 pp. \$4.50. Order from author: 65055 500 W, Topeka, IN 46571.

Hertzler, Emanuel C., *The Other Hertzler-Hartzlers*. Goshen, IN: Published by author, 1995. 590 pp. Order from: Masthof Press, RR 1, Box 20, Morgantown, PA 19543-9701.

Hochstetler, Mrs. Elmer L., *Andrew Hochstetler and Elizabeth Lehman Family History*. Nappanee, IN: Published by author, 1964. 48 pp. \$5. Order from: Dan M. Schmucker, 1104 W Madison St, Franklin, NY 42134.

Hoover, Lena and Lester M., *The Family of Francis B. and Magdalena Weaver, 1835-1996*. Lititz, PA: Published by authors, 1996. 159 pp. Order from authors: 1001 E. Oregon Rd, Lititz, PA 17543.

Further information on these books may be obtained from the Mennontie Historical Library, Goshen, College, Goshen, IN 46526; 219 525-7418.

(Continued from page 14)

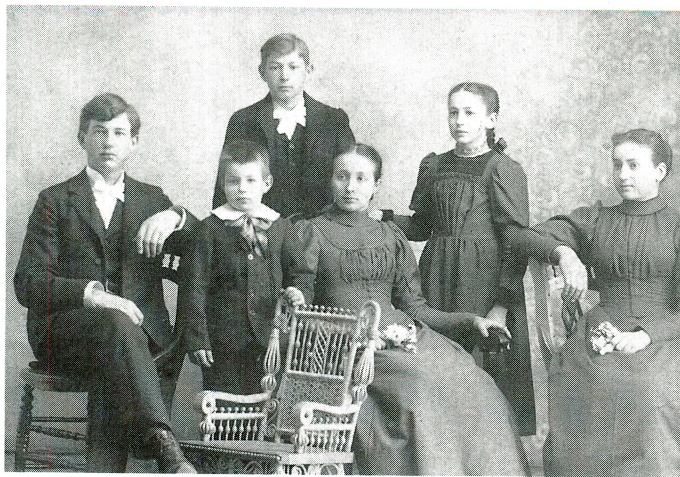
While Ira S. Johns grew up in an Amish-Mennonite family, Elizabeth Rickert grew up in a Mennonite family in Columbiana County, Ohio. Her father, Allen Rickert, was a farmer and was ordained a minister of the Midway Mennonite Church in 1892. The photograph

shows the siblings of Elizabeth in about 1895. Notice the style of dress; compare that with what Elizabeth wore 30 years later, as seen in the other photograph. This change of dress illustrates one form of renewal that was occurring in the Mennonite Church from the 1890s to the 1920s. For Elizabeth and Ira S., as for many others, it was one specific way to

symbolize their renewed spiritual commitment. The two photographs also show Elizabeth at two stages of life, one as a teenager of 18 years of age, and the other at 47 years of age as a mother and wife of a deacon and minister.

Elizabeth (or Lizzie) studied one year at the Bible department of Elkhart Institute in 1897. It may have been at this time that she became acquainted with Ira S. Johns. They were married in 1901. She gave birth to eight children between 1903 and 1920.

The children of Allen and Sarah (Lehman) Rickert are as follows (l-r): Edwin, Isaiah, Harvey, Elizabeth, Margaret, and Edith.



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*From Ford garage to
interpretive center:
Illinois Amish
Interpretive Center,
Arcola, Illinois
Credit: Illinois Amish
Interpretive Center*

Illinois Amish Interpretive Center

By Wilmer Otto

The Arthur, Illinois, Amish settlement began with an 1864 scouting trip by two residents of Somerset County, Pennsylvania, Bishop Joel Beachy and Mose Yoder. They traveled by train through Wisconsin, Missouri, and Illinois. Preferring Illinois, they returned in the fall and purchased several farms. On March 3, 1865, Mose Yoder, Daniel D. Otto, Daniel P. Miller, and their families arrived by train at Arcola and settled on the West Prairie, seven miles west of there. Within ten years, 20 to 25 families from Ohio, Indiana, and

Iowa had also moved to the area. The resultant economic boom helped to establish the village of Arthur, eight miles northwest of Arcola. Today the community consists of 22 church districts of approximately 3500 residents. This is the story the Illinois Amish Interpretive Center at Arcola, Illinois, tries to place in perspective.

The Problem

The state's largest Old Order Amish settlement around Arthur, Illinois, has attracted increased interest to the area with the advent of the "Amish Tourism Industry." This industry's treatment of the his-

tory and culture of the Amish, here as in many other states, often is characterized by banal, disrespectful, and utterly erroneous presentations. One example of this is the depiction of barns with hex signs painted on them; such decoration has never been an accepted part of Amish farmsteads in Illinois or anywhere else.

Another example is a listing of mangled English phrases offered to tourists in this community as typical of the Amish. Contrary to the stereotype which this sort of misrepresentation perpetuates, linguists have long been impressed with the excellent command of

English exhibited by the Amish. They have commented on the Amish pattern of bringing phrases from their second language (English) into their primary language (Pennsylvania Dutch) while refraining from transporting phrases from their primary language into the English, as do some groups.

Ironically, one of the earliest written references to the Illinois Amish, written ten years after their arrival at Arcola, addressed this very issue. The author, Henry Niles, a Douglas County historian, generously opined in 1875 that their English was as good as his own, and "in the dark one would never suspect the presence of a German-speaking person." This is hardly the stuff of restaurant place mat ridicule.

Those examples, as insulting to the Amish as they are confusing to visitors, exist because no one in the community had organized to present a more accurate picture. Because many visitors sincerely desire an educational experience that includes some connection with Amish history and culture presented in a respectful milieu rather than through the sugary caricatures presented in most tourist brochures, the Illinois Amish Interpretive Center was organized.

The Process

To distinguish our efforts from the ubiquitous hucksterism found attendant to most Amish settle-

ments, four businessmen-organizers, Chris Helmuth, J. B. Helmuth, Fred Helmuth and I, established a not-for-profit corporation in 1994 to provide the following combination of services to both the Amish and the non-Amish:

- Provide a series of permanent exhibits to relate the European history of the Anabaptist/Amish movement
- Relate the history of the Arthur Amish settlement from its 1865 beginnings
- Preserve historically significant artifacts from the Amish community
- Provide an exhibition area that will help attract traveling exhibits in some way related to the subject of the Anabaptist/Amish movement

We leased a 1916-era former Ford garage, containing 10,000 square feet in downtown Arcola. We hired Stan Kaufman, a design consultant of Berlin, Ohio, to develop the interior plan, find the artifacts, do the research, design exhibits conveying the content of his research, and to oversee exhibit installation. Work commenced in March of 1996. The facility opened on November 8, 1996, with the expectation that exhibits would be completed by May 1, 1997. This sounds far less interesting than the actual events turned out to be.

We organizers were all fully engaged in running our own businesses. We imagined that by work-

ing through the not-for-profit corporation we could accomplish our goals, while avoiding the complexities and problems of a community-based museum association, such as lengthy committee meetings (while consensus was sought on every question, mundane or profound), political infighting (over whose heirlooms were appropriate for display), and interminable delays (while volunteers dithered over their assignments).

We were surprised on several counts. Hiring an experienced consultant may have saved committee meeting time, but not time overall. The consultant debated for hours with himself over such issues as the shade of gray for the baseboard trim and the shape of the baseboard itself! Political infighting was avoided. Instead, the increasingly enthusiastic organizers spent hours visiting with the consultant, distracting him from his assignments, and ultimately creating a problem worse than infighting in delaying completion of the exhibits! (I was a major culprit.) In the rush toward completion, the designer hired assistants, whose monthly stipends caused increasing consternation for the organizers.

Searching for Facts and Artifacts

In the absence of a local historical society, we were apprehensive as to the availability of a large selection

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Dues for subscription-membership in the Mennonite Church Historical Association (\$25 annual), inquiries, articles, or news items should be sent to the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church, 1700 South Main, Goshen, IN 46526. Telephone (219) 535-7477, FAX (219) 535-7293, E-mail: johnes@goshen.edu.

Microfilms of Volumes I-L of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* are available from: University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.



The 1880s style Amish Mütze of minister Daniel Schrock.
Credit: Illinois Amish Interpretive Center

of artifacts. Consultant Stan Kaufman conducted the search for artifacts with the bemused assistance of several of the retired Amish, who introduced him to residents of the community's oldest homesteads. Amazing articles were discovered, such as the following:

A suit (Mütze) from the 1880s.

The Amish typically recycled their older clothing into scraps for carpeting, and so forth, but this suit happened to survive. After its wearer, minister Daniel Schrock, died from a fall from a railroad trestle while in Kansas on church business in 1890, his family saved it for sentimental reasons. The trousers were laced up

in the rear, possibly indicating that suspenders had not been approved for this community in 1890. The coat is cut in almost a swallow-tail style, which is a surprise to many local Amish, who are unaware of this tradition. Textile historians are interested in the suit's unique coarse gabardine fabric. We also found a secretary bookcase made by Daniel Schrock.

A business ledger. This ledger, kept by Daniel D. Otto (1831-1908), one of the founders of the 1865 settlement, surfaced in Kokomo, Indiana. Its entries from 1857 to 1893 revealed much about life in Pennsylvania before the move to Illinois: the cost of hiring help to pick rocks out of fields; means by which to

gain off-farm income, e.g., digging and hauling coal, carpentry work, dealing in dry goods, hiring out unmarried minors at twelve-and-one-half cents per day during harvest. It names some forty individuals with whom Otto carried debit or credit balances, and indicates how the balances were incurred. Strangely, no entries could be connected to preparations for the move to Illinois. The ledger simply resumes thirty days after arrival in Illinois with a listing of meals provided for, and charged to, Mose Yoder and his sons.

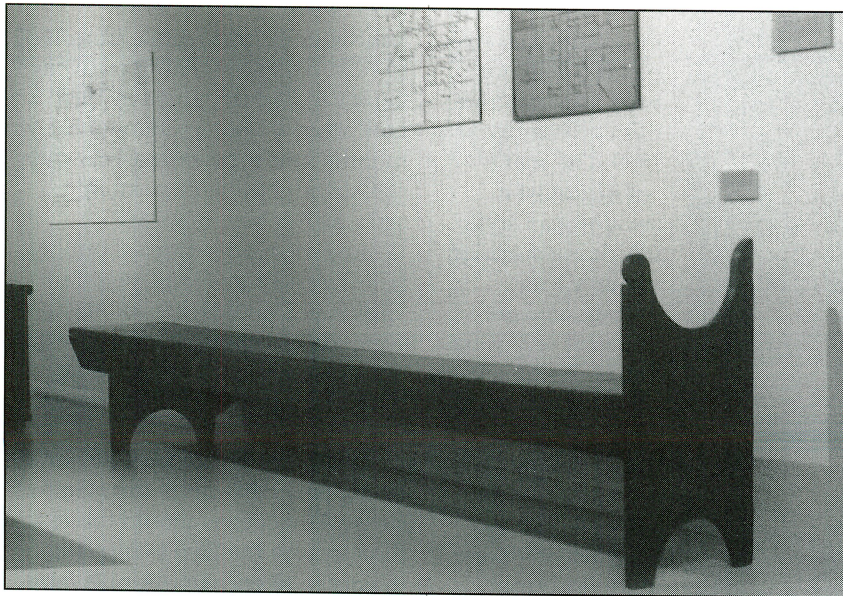
A compilation of 110 letters. The letters were sent by Andrew Diener

(1860-1943), to his sister in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, from 1885 to 1938, and provided narratives of daily life. Diener, single in 1885, left Lancaster, stayed in Ohio for a few months, and then worked his way across the continent, eventually arriving in Oregon in 1890. Whimsical observations about his fellow Amish travelers included: "Minister Dan Beachy said to Chris Gingerich (who was demonstrating a handstand on a train traveling sixty miles per hour), 'That's not very Christlich.'"

These letters provided the astonishing news that up to thirty to forty single Amish boys would travel to Illinois from the East to help the twenty to twenty-five Amish families living in Douglas County by the 1880s with the fall harvest. Not so astonishing were the notes that many of the boys, including Diener, fell in love with girls in the community—sometimes the hired girl or a daughter of the host family—married and stayed in the community.

Each of Diener's letters opened with a devotional salutation and closed with a request for prayers. In them he told of the weather, the latest crop prices, loan arrangements by Eastern Amish to Amish in Illinois, and health problems among the Amish in the community. There were no self-revelations, no references to the wider turmoil within the Amish Mennonite Church, and no allusions to the still nascent aversion to technology which was to become such a dominant part of their culture after the turn of the century.

A Froschauer Bible. This Bible may be the most significant discovery. Dated 1586, it is in average condition and has pictorial decoration characteristic of the work of printers of Zurich, Switzerland. It is an unusually small size, approximately eight inches by fourteen inches. Its provenance is traceable only to the Esch family known to have resided in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, in the 1830s.



*An unusual bench brought from Holmes County, Ohio, to Illinois in 1881.
Credit: Illinois Amish Interpretive Center*

A six-board blanket chest. This artifact was brought to the area in 1865 by original settler Daniel D. Otto. Its rather primitive workmanship contrasts sharply with that found in a blanket chest brought by Daniel P. Miller, another of the pioneer families. That chest, constructed in the Soap Hollow style and excellently crafted and stenciled, is a significant early example of skill in the woodworking crafts which so dominate Amish off-farm income sources today.

A rope bed. This bed, covered with the original milk paint, dates from the 1840s. Assuring us that there was absolutely nothing of historical interest left in his attic, the owner had been kind enough to let us look anyway. There it was!

A rare quilt. Dated 1881, this quilt is among the earliest known to have been made by the Amish, who began borrowing this art form from their neighbors in the mid-1800s. Even more unusual is the placement of the creators' names in the stitching!

Interestingly, the provenance of many of the items we found was well established because of the traditional Amish interest in genealogy. Despite the interest in genealogy,

often there is little sentimental interest in retaining heirlooms. As a result, many artifacts have been lost from the community through estate sales, sometimes because the heirs were curious about the value of such items. The Interpretive Center hopes to kindle interest in retaining artifacts within the community.

Rounding Out the Characters

We continually reminded the exhibit designer that although the didactic approach—lots of text in small type, dense explorations of theological themes, and abstract discussions of distinctions without purpose—may be important to historians, and is one method of imparting knowledge, the Interpretive Center is also partly in the entertainment business. We wanted an insightful look at a few specific areas, with subjects chosen, in part, because of the ease with which they could be visually displayed. To that end, we profiled some of the following personalities involved in the early days of the settlement:

Bishop Joel Beachy. From Grantsville, Maryland, Beachy

scouted the area with Mose Yoder in 1864, advised that a settlement be started, but never moved here himself. He loaned funds to many of the settlers, bought a half section of land and subdivided it for resale, and provided for his son Daniel to move his family in 1870. Daniel became the area's senior bishop, serving until his death in 1938. Unfortunately, little oral tradition remains about Joel, although his influence was probably the most important factor in the establishment of today's Old Order Amish settlement at Arthur.

Joel Beachy's generosity is still recalled around Grantsville, where he lived out his life. It is said that anyone coming to seek financial assistance when visitors were present was asked to return the next day. If Beachy was alone when the supplicant returned, Beachy would ask simply, "How much?" as he opened a secret compartment in his ceiling. His devotion to the ministry is cited in the tale of his stopping overnight at an inn occupied by several drunken travelers on a trip between his Maryland home and Holmes County, Ohio. When mockingly asked for a sermon, he obliged and continued until his tormentors were silenced.

Allan Campbell (1809-1875).

Campbell owned much of the land in the area known as West Prairie where the Amish settled. Because of its poor drainage, Campbell acquired over 3,000 acres for as little as twenty-five cents an acre during the fifteen years before the Amish arrived. He sold some of the land for seven and eight dollars per acre to the Amish settlers. Where Campbell had grazed cattle on unfenced land, the Amish soon installed drainage tile, produced multiple crops, and erected large homesteads.

As owner of the only ferry across the Kaskasia River, Campbell was in a unique position, not only to sell land to immigrants carrying large amounts of cash, but to rob and murder them as well. He was

accused of this in oral traditions extant among the Amish today. Imagine our surprise in discovering a 1983 tape recording by Campbell's eighty-nine-year-old grandson in which he, with a chuckle, verified the tradition.

Campbell's tape recording also recalled cattle drives to Chicago, which his grandfather organized, before the coming of the Illinois Central Railroad in 1855. The phenomenal growth of Chicago may have been responsible, in part, for the generally excellent prices Amish farmers received for produce and cattle after 1865.

Samuel Miller. The colorful personality of this Amish pioneer is preserved in local oral tradition. After walking from Pennsylvania to Illinois in the 1860s to look things over, he decided to make the move. Ignoring the excellent rail connections, he walked back to Pennsylvania, sold his possessions, sewed his money into the linings of his most ragged clothing, and walked all the way back to Illinois. As an old man in the 1920s, he was still a husky, robust figure. Orba Helmuth (1915-) recalls Miller's opinion that if Jack Dempsey would just come to Arthur, he could "still show him a thing or two." The sight of a bearded Amishman climbing into the ring with the legendary prizefighter undoubtedly would have sold many tickets!

Isaac and Susanna Wefly. In March of 1865 these non-Amish honeymooners, rode the train with a party of 24 immigrants: the first three Amish families to arrive in Illinois. The Weflys wrote an account of their trip, something none of the Amish families seem to have done. That account was recently uncovered and used by the Weflys' grandson in writing a paper for course work at Illinois State University. He wrote that his grandparents helped the 24 Amish folks unload their cattle and farm equipment when the train arrived at Arcola, and that the hotel operator appeared reluctant to rent rooms to

this strange group until Wefly intervened.

The next day, March 4, 1865, the group struggled to the West Prairie through mud so deep that the wheel hubs were dragging. The Weflys then struck off for Bement, eighteen miles northwest, visited relatives, and decided to stay in the area. The discovery of their account is our best glimpse of the settlers' first impressions of the Prairie.

Summary

One year after beginning this adventure, the organizers are considerably wiser and somewhat chastened. The goal of an Interpretive Center that gives more than the superficial tourists' interests in buggies, quilts, and barns may have been achieved. On the other hand, the designer insisted that the first exhibits one views upon entering the Center should feature those three items "because that is what the tourists are interested in."

We sought to respect the Amish aversion to photographers in our introductory video. In a permanent exhibit, however, visitors see a large photo featuring a group of women, one of whom is looking directly into the camera. She is clearly unhappy at the intrusion of the photographer.


We wanted to represent quality works of art in our gift shop, yet some of the paintings border on kitsch. Some of the best information on the Amish is found in books, many of which also contain photos clearly taken surreptitiously, and probably published without the subjects' consent. We proudly market Steve Nolt's book, *The History of the Amish*, and John Ruth's video, *The Amish, A People of Preservation*. But we wonder whether by providing a marketplace, we also encourage authors and producers whose works vary between the awful and the truly awful.

We wanted a well-researched history of the Arthur community to be the dramatic focal point of the Center, but the cursory look we offer is based on only three or four

well-known, previously published sources. There was no survey of early newspapers, no search of courthouse records, nor any systematic interviewing of the four or five nonagenarian residents of the community who had direct contact with some of the early settlers. Perhaps we are being naïve in believing so much could be delivered in so short a time.

On the other hand, visitors to the Center are generally complimentary. Many of their questions about Amish life are addressed, the floor plan is unique, the text is professionally mounted, the track lighting provides a professional atmosphere, and the video is conducted in a narrative style in keeping with the subject. Over time, the exhibits can be expanded and upgraded.

Having ventured into the "Amish Tourism industry" with a certain squeamishness, we await the verdict of time. Will we have provided a meaningful alternative to souvenir and T-shirt shops, or will the success of this venture only speed the drift toward a Disney World-like neighborhood and bumper-to-bumper Winnebagos on country roads further intruding into the daily life of the Amish? Will we preempt future eyesores such as reptile farms, go-cart tracks, and haunted houses, or will we simply attract them, along with ever more outrageously dressed tourists? Will the Amish develop a deeper appreciation for the value of their family heirlooms, or will we simply draw more of the suave quilt pickers who canvas door to door for our community's heritage quilts and remove them to New York, having paid only a fraction of their true worth?

Our hope is that future historians would succeed in unraveling these questions, and that our experience would be a good resource to them. 

Wilmer Otto is an adventurer-entrepreneur from Arcola, Illinois.

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I Wish I'd Been There

MHB readers respond to the question:
What is the one event in Anabaptist-Mennonite history you wish you could have witnessed
—and Why?

Hübmaier v. Zwingli

by Arnold W. Cressman



Illustration A—Balthasar Hübmaier, popular preacher and charismatic contender

I wish I could have seen the face of Zwingli at the Fraumünster back there in 1525. It was December the 29th, on a Friday, which was a regular congregational meeting. The town was abuzz with the word that the great Dr. Balthasar Hübmaier was to read a recantation of his views, in favor of the views that Zwingli promoted on infant baptism.

We need a little background. Balthasar Hübmaier had probably been a peasant boy who discovered rather late in life that he had great academic gifts. Lacking finances, his

education started late. When he did get into the academic circle, he advanced rapidly. He studied under the great Dr. John Eck, a noted Catholic theologian. Balthasar Hübmaier rapidly made his way through the university, met all his requirements in a very short period of time, got his doctor's degree, and was invited to become the main preacher at the noted Catholic cathedral in Regensburg. There he became the congregation's beloved preacher. He had many friends and hardly any enemies. He was noted also for setting up in Regensburg a sort of cathedral to which people would come to be healed, and many miracles were purported to have been performed. In his heyday, after only a few years, Hübmaier suddenly left town. He became a popular preacher at a little church in Waldshut, just north of Zürich. People poured in from some distance to hear him preach. Waldshut, however, was in the Austrian Empire.

During this time he did what Menno Simons had done: he began to study the New Testament. He studied particularly the epistles of Paul. And like Menno, he discovered that he had been misled. The Bible did not say what the Catholic Church said it did. He became disillusioned, and tried even harder to discover the truth, especially on the matter of infant baptism. He discovered that there was not a word of affirmation for this Catholic doctrine. So he began rejecting it.

After King Ferdinand, the head of the Austrian Empire, had put

down the Peasants' Revolts in 1525, he was then free to concentrate on cleaning up the "heresy" in his kingdom. Dr. Balthasar Hübmaier was obviously a threat. Hübmaier had been rebaptized as an adult by William Reublin, who was one of the earliest Anabaptists. Hübmaier, in turn, baptized 300 people from the congregation at Waldshut and then sixty more a little later. These inroads of the "heretical" religion had to be stopped, as far as Ferdinand was concerned. Waldshut was the place he intended to start. He descended with his army on the town.

Hübmaier had so little time to leave that he had no organized plans. He and his wife made their way to Zürich, no safe place, but at least he avoided the war which followed. Waldshut was totally defeated. Within a few days it was discovered that Hübmaier was in the city of Zürich. Thus Zwingli's mortal enemy, right under his feet, was found, incarcerated, and punished. Hübmaier requested a disputation on the question of infant baptism versus adult baptism. Surprisingly, this was granted.

Zwingli debated Hübmaier but he was surprised by the fact that Hübmaier took an unusual approach to the debate. He had done his homework well. He noted the times, places, and the exact content of what Zwingli had said earlier on the subject of adult baptism. In earlier times Zwingli was in favor of adult baptism. Now he had compromised simply to satisfy the city council. It is certain that people with

some intellectual savvy would have noticed that Zwingli was totally discomfited in this theological duel. In any case, the town council, as expected, declared Zwingli the winner. And Hübmaier was asked to write a statement of recantation and to sign it. He was also to promise to read it before the city council, and before the congregation at the Fraumünster church, and later he was to read it to the congregation at Grüningen. All this Hübmaier agreed to do, because he had tendencies toward depression and discouragement. Now he felt totally devastated.

So the day was set—January 29. The congregation had been informed that the great Dr. Hübmaier would be reading a recantation statement. This would prove that Zwingli had been right all along. It should be noted in terms of theological excellence, Hübmaier was equal to Luther, and had far more finesse. This Nab was the Anabaptists' theological Goliath. And here he was asked to read a recantation. Hübmaier himself admitted that one of his weaknesses was the fear of bodily pain.

So the moment arrived. Zwingli stood in the main pulpit. Hübmaier was brought to stand behind a smaller podium. Certainly one could see on the face of Zwingli the gloating of success that an athlete demonstrates just when he knows that he is about to win a match. Instead, something altogether different happened. Hübmaier laid aside his prepared recantation, and recanted the recantation. He spoke ad lib with deep emotion, saying, "Oh, what anguish and travail I have suffered this night over the statements which I myself have made. So I say here and now, I can't and will not recant." He then proceeded to defend believers' baptism.

Zwingli, totally discombobulated, his face red from embarrassment and anger, tried his best to quell the uproar. Balthasar Hübmaier was hustled off to the Wellenberg prison. He was kept in prison for

some time. His torture included the rack. For some reason he was released. Hübmaier and his wife traveled east to Moravia, which was about the only oasis of tolerance still left in the persecuting world at that time.

But how I wish I could have seen Zwingli's face, when after setting up everything for his own purposes and glory, he was discomfited by a theologian greater than himself.

Worship at Mellinger

by Steve Nolt

Mennonite historical scholarship has grown in almost all directions during the past few decades. We know a lot more about the lives of church leaders, the growth and development of institutions, mission activity, controversy and schism, and theological debate and concord. Yet there are times I wish I

had actually been there to witness events that remain cloudy in the historical mirror. We still know too little about Mennonite worship in the past. It's a great irony, actually. Nothing could be more central to the life and witness of any congregation than its meeting for corporate worship. Yet perhaps because worship is so "common" in the life of the church, its story easily gets lost. Often we know more about the history of our church buildings and who owned the farms around them than we do about what actually went on inside those meetinghouses.

I wish I could attend a meeting for worship at my home congregation, Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., during the early 1800s. I'd like to go inside that 1767 limestone structure and experience worship with them. I'd like to know more about their Sunday mornings together.

We know which hymnbook they used, but did the congregation have favorite songs which they sang more often than others? What did the music sound like? How long did it take them to learn the new hymns included in the 1804 *Unpartheyisches Gesangbuch*?

Did any of the preachers have

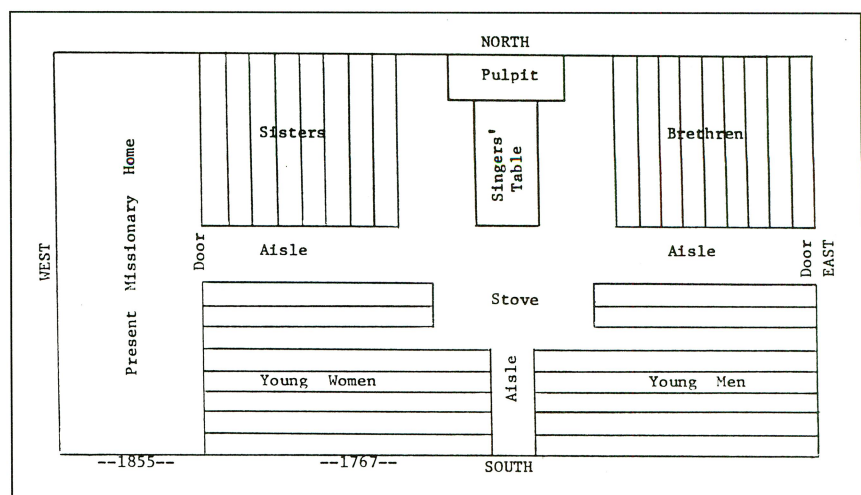


Illustration B—The floor plan of the first Mellinger meetinghouse. But what was the shape of worship?

Credit: Sketch by A. W. Denlinger from 250 Years, Light from a Hill, anniversary booklet of the Mellinger District, 1967.

favorite biblical texts or themes which they wove into their sermons, no matter what the subject was? Did sermons include references to current events in the life of the young nation—warnings or encouragement to the congregation as its members found their way in a restless new society?

And I'd like to be there as they baptized and joined in communion. Today we have some surviving documents that suggest the standard words leaders spoke at such events, but what was it like at the time? What did the people of Mellinger think about the practice of foot washing, a rite common among the American Amish but apparently not among their Mennonite neighbors? We know that the congregation's venerable immigrant deacon, Martin Mellinger (1763-1842)—from whom the congregation actually derived its name—had witnessed foot washing among the German Baptist Brethren (Church of the Brethren) while visiting in another country. He came away from that experience believing foot washing was a meaningful symbol which his church should adopt. But he met stiff opposition within the congregation from—among others—one of my ancestors, preacher Heinrich Buckwalter (1742-1805). I'd like to talk with them about foot washing and what each one saw in its practice. And I wish I'd been there when the congregation first decided to include this rite of service in their communion worship sometime in the 1810s.

In the future historians may be able to use our church bulletins to gain a better idea of what our worship today was really like. But worship is something you have to experience, not just explain. That's why I wish I had been there. *L*

New Treasures: Archives of the Mennonite Church

By Dennis Stoesz,
Archivist

What follows is a sampling of personal papers and organizational records that have come into the archives during the first six months of 1997. They are listed alphabetically by the name of the collection.

Graber, C. L., 1895-1987, and Mina (Roth) Graber, 1895-1968, Goshen, Indiana. Photograph album, 1950-1952, of Grabers' work with refugees in Europe after World War II, under the auspices of the Mennonite Central Committee, and of a trip to Puerto Rico, 1953. Includes pictures of workers, refugees, and Mennonite families and churches in Germany, Netherlands, France, and Switzerland. Persons include Christ

Witmer family, C. F. Klassen, Rev. and Mrs. J. J. Voth, Orie O. Miller, home of Christian Schnebele, and Edward and Elsie Butzman. Album also includes photographs of Dan and Mary (Graber) Widmer, Iowa, and of their visit to Puerto Rico, 1953, where their daughter Gladys Widmer worked. 1 Photograph Album. Donor: Gladys (Graber) Beyler.

Jubilee Mennonite Church, 1996- , West Liberty, Ohio. Church records, 1995-96, of the birth of this congregation. Includes church bulletins, a Lenten devotional, a short history of the church, correspondence, membership lists, a mission statement, a treasurer's report, and a program of the first official meeting, January 21, 1996. 2 Files. Donor: Mary K. Yoder.



Peeling potatoes at Gronau Refugee Camp, Germany, 1952. Source: C. L. and Mina (Roth) Graber Photograph Collection.



Miss Emma Francesia is showing Professor Olive Wyse's Home Economics Class how to make a cake with the new bland lard, when this Goshen College class toured Swift Company's Test Kitchen in Chicago, in 1941. Persons are identified as follows (l-r): Carol Glick, Miss Emma Francesia (home economist and baking specialist), Anna Lois Bucher Charles, Avis Hostetler, Orval Shoemaker (in back), Alta Hertzler, _____ (unidentified), Ralph Hernley (in back), Ella Mae Weaver Miller, Lois Wingard Stalter, _____ (woman in back unidentified), Marian Kauffman Jones, Miriam Sieber Lind, and Olive Wyse. Thanks go to Marilyn Voran, Lois Stalter, and Elsie Sutter for identifying persons in photograph. Source: Olive G. Wyse Collection.

Kreider, Leonard C. Photographs, 1927-1931, taken by Kreider when he was a student at Goshen College. Includes informal shots of friends, dating couples, fun and game activities, sports events, campus buildings, dormitory rooms, faculty, building of Coffman hall and the Goshen dam. Also includes formal photographs of several indi-

vidual students, sport teams, debating team, Vesperian society, staff of *Record* newspaper, 1931, and the Aurora society. Kreider quite likely developed his own pictures. Collection consists of three albums, mostly identified, original negatives, and one panorama photograph of the whole Goshen College faculty and student body. 10 linear

inches. Donor: Rachel (Weaver) Kreider, Goshen, Indiana.

Mennonite Central Committee, 1920- , Akron, Pennsylvania.

Records, 1941-1995, including various series of records reflecting the work of this service organization. The one set of records, dating from 1975-84, have been microfilmed and are found on 56 reels. This includes the official correspondence 1984, reports, 1975-84, Peace Section files, 1980-84, personnel files, 1981-85, and the Polish Trainee personnel files, 1971-83. The other set of records include audiovisual materials, 1967-95, Financial Services files, 1941-82, Washington Office files, 1968-93, European Office files, 1950s-84, and files from several district offices: Great Lakes office, 1968-84, Central States office, 1972-84, and the West Coast office, 1952-84. 9.5 linear feet. Donor: Irene Leaman, Records Manager.

Mennonite Church of Warsaw, 1988- , Warsaw, Indiana.

Church bulletins, 1989-1996, from its beginning when four couples started meeting in Warsaw. The congregation began to use church bulletins on December 10, 1989. Bob Gerber was pastor from 1989-1995, and Frank Byler was interim pastor in 1996. Donor: Arlo C. Brenneman, Goshen, Indiana.

Mothers and their children who are involved in Cradle Roll pose for a photograph in 1911 in the newly completed building of the 26th Street Mennonite Mission, Chicago, Illinois. Quite likely Barbara (Hernley) Paul with her two-year-old child is on the photograph—she was a worker at this mission for two years with her husband, John C. Paul, around 1911.

Source: Twenty-Sixth Street Mennonite Church Photograph Collection, Chicago, Illinois.





Mrs. J. J. Voth of Kansas, having devotions with a refugee in her room at the Gronau Refugee Camp, Germany, 1952. Source: C. L. and Mina (Roth) Graber Photograph Collection.

Mininger, Paul, 1908-1997, and Mary (Erb) Mininger, 1906-1983, Goshen, Indiana. Papers, 1885-1994, from three generations, including correspondence from grandmother, Mrs. Eliga D. Mininger, 1903-09, an 1885 childhood scrapbook from Hettie Kulp, and correspondence, articles, photographs, and sermons from Mininger's father and mother J. D. and Hettie (Kulp) Mininger, dating from 1932-1955. Materials from Paul Mininger include sermon notes, school notes, and correspondence, dating from 1944-1994, reflecting his ministry at North Goshen Mennonite Church, his presidency at Goshen College, 1954-70, and his research into Christian higher education. 23.75 linear feet. Donors: Paul Mininger and Jim Mininger.

Phalo Literary Club, 1913-, Goshen, Indiana. Records, 1913-1994, including a minute book, 1978-1994, Program booklets, 1974-92, Constitutions, 1958-89, 75th anniversary program booklet, 1912-1988, and programs and charter membership of that first year, 1913-14. The first meeting was held on November 25, 1913, when twenty women met in the home of Mrs. D. S. Gerig, on 8th Street in Goshen. The purpose of the club was to study and discuss literature through the review of books. The name of

the club was born when its charter members decided the subjects to be considered would include Philosophy, History, Art, Literature, and Oratory. 4 linear inches. Donors: Florence Amstutz, Pauline K. King, and Ethel O. Yoder.

Schmucker, Mark A. Papers, 1980-1987, including correspondence, articles, and newspaper clippings regarding the October 1982 court case in which Schmucker was convicted for failing to register for the draft. He was a 22-year-old Goshen College student at the time. Schmucker was ordered to pay a \$4,000 fine by the U.S. district court in Cleveland, Ohio, and sentenced to three years' probation, two of which he served in public service work at Emmaus Home, a United Church of Christ-affiliated residence for retarded adults in Marthasville, Missouri. He was the third person in the nation, and the first Mennonite, to be prosecuted after a 1980 presidential proclamation reinstating draft registration. 20 linear inches. Donors: Anna Belle and Arden Schmucker, Alliance, Ohio.

Seniors for Peace, 1988-, Goshen, Indiana. Records, 1988-95, including minutes, programs, articles, and correspondence on the work of this group. Many presentations were given at the Greencroft Senior Center over the years on various topics of peace. 10 linear inches. Donors: Florence Amstutz, Atlee and Winifred Beechy, and Evelyn Kreider.

Steiner, M. S., 1866-1911.

Correspondence, 1885-1889, from Steiner in Ohio to Abraham P. Shenk of Elida, Ohio (1885), and of Rockingham County, Virginia (1885-1889). In 1885, Steiner writes about attending a Sabbath school (Sunday school) at Bluffton, Ohio. In March 1888, he writes that "out of the money collected in the [Sunday] school not a cent is to be used for any thing but spreading the Gospel." Steiner suggests that the money be sent to the evangelizing fund at Elkhart, Indiana. 1 File. Donor: Esther Shenk Buckwalter, Newport News, Virginia.

Twenty-Sixth Street Mennonite Church, 1906-1944, Chicago, Illinois. Two photographs, 1911, of the cradle roll and the Mennonite mission at the time John C. and Barbara Hernley Paul were workers there. Photographs were taken in the newly completed building on 26th Street in Chicago. This 26th St. church was begun in 1906 by A. M. and Anna (Annacker) Eash, and they were the main directors of the mission through the years. In November 1908, eight converts were baptized and received into church membership. By 1909, revival meetings by S. E. Allgyer and others resulted in over 92 converts to Christ. The mission was under the Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, until 1923, when the Central Mennonite Conference assumed leadership of it. 1 File. Donor: Winifred Paul, Scottdale, Pennsylvania.



"That's just the way it looks in the library," Forrest King (left) and Orie Eigsti, Goshen College, 1931. Source: Leonard C. Kreider Photograph Collection.

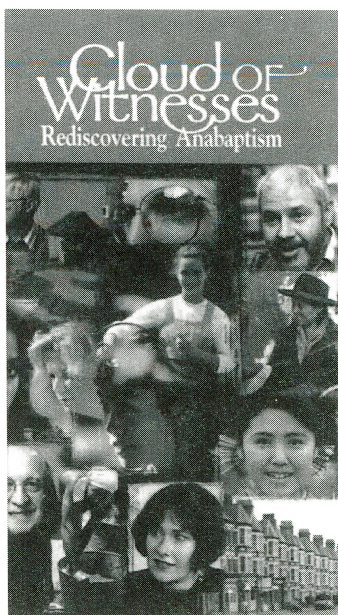


"Typical Reading Room," Goshen College, 1931. Source: Leonard C. Kreider Photograph Collection.

Wyse, Olive G., 1906- , Goshen, Indiana. Papers and photographs, 1918-1995, reflecting Wyse's fifty years of involvement and teaching as Professor of Home Economics at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, 1926-1976. It includes course outlines, lists of Home Economic graduates, 1928-69, a report on "equal pay for equal work" (1947), minutes and reports of the Faculty Fellowship Committee, Social Committee and Faculty Dinners, 1940-69, and material on a 1957 Conference on the Education of Women. The collection also includes materials from her high school education at Wayland, Iowa (1922), her college education at Iowa Wesleyan College (1924) and Goshen College (B.A., 1926), and her graduate work at State University of Iowa (M.S., 1933) and at Columbia University (Ed.D., 1946). Wyse wrote a history of the Goshen College Home Economics Department in 1963, wrote a senior statement in 1976 upon her retirement, and wrote a reflective piece called "History as Identity" in 1978. 10 linear feet. Donor: Olive G. Wyse. *LB*

—Dennis Stoesz has served as archivist at the Archives of the Mennonite Church since 1989.

News and Notes



New Cloud of Witnesses video series explores relevance of Anabaptism—Mennonite Board of Missions has launched a new video series looking at what Anabaptism means around the world. The first edition focuses on contemporary expressions of Anabaptism in England.

"Anabaptism is not some dead history but is relevant and being discovered by people who are serious about their faith," said producer Jerry L. Holsopple regarding the purpose of the series. "I've had a longtime dream of telling *Martyrs Mirror* stories in contemporary settings on video," he added.

Stories of early Anabaptists are interwoven with commentary by numerous Christians in England, including Stuart Murray, director of evangelism and church planting at Spurgeon's College, London; Adrian Chatfield, educator at St. John's College in Oxford, England; and Nelson Kraybill, until recently director of London Mennonite Center and now president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

"This series is especially for disaffected Mennonites, persons who

are leaning toward the mainstream of Protestantism and who aren't really sure if there is any relevance in Anabaptism for today," explained Holsopple.

Themes include discipleship, living faithfully, understanding the Bible, evangelism, living for peace and justice, forming community. A dramatic vignette is included telling the story of Nelleken Jasper from the *Martyrs Mirror* interpreted for twentieth century and videotaped in Richmond, Va.

The video series is also designed to provide more substantial Anabaptist history and thought as a complement to other videos and curricula previously available and comes at a time when Mennonite high schools are working on a new textbook for Mennonite history (Herald Press). The Youth Ministry Council of the Anabaptist churches also expressed interest in the effort.

"MBM wants to hold before the church the biblical foundation, the Anabaptist witness, and current expressions of Anabaptist understandings of the gospel," said Ken Weaver, director of Media.

"This is a fresh and creative expression of the Anabaptist vision from an urban British perspective, making that vision relevant to our modern world," stated Dr. Gerald R. Brunk, professor of history at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg. Dale Shenk, Bible teacher at Bethany Christian High School, Goshen, Ind., says, "The video is firmly rooted in the current setting, but also makes clear connections with 16th-century people, events, and writing."

The first video, 65 minutes in length, is divided into seven sections and includes a study guide. The video and study guide cost \$34.95 U.S./\$48.50 Canadian plus shipping. Call or write Mennonite Board of Missions Media Ministries at 800-999-3534, 1251 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22801.

Bethaus, Meetinghouse, Church—

The Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania will host *Bethaus, Meetinghouse, Church*, an international conference on the Architecture of the Anabaptist-Mennonite worship spaces and places, at the Mennonite Heritage Center, 565 Yoder Road, Harleysville, Pennsylvania, October 16-18, 1997.

The aim of the conference is to understand original Anabaptist-Mennonite "places and spaces of worship" on three continents, especially those built or adapted after long periods of hidden or home meetings and those built by immigrant communities using their own skills and designs.

What were the formative influences that shaped these buildings, in the light of ideas of congregation, worship, and community? What constraints were set by available materials, the environment, and the political context? What were the vernacular and prevailing period styles, and surrounding domestic and religious structures? What controversies have surrounded Anabaptist-Mennonite meetingplaces building in "second generation" structures where high-art style influenced building initiatives? Is there a distinctive Anabaptist-Mennonite architecture of meeting and worship?

Participation is invited by all interested persons who wish to contribute to these discussions. The conference will include three public evening programs, daytime sessions, and a Saturday bus tour of significant regional meetinghouses.

The conference papers will provide a new body of writing for use by scholars and laypersons within and beyond the Anabaptist-Mennonite community for the preservation and interpretation of existing historic buildings, as well as a guide for current and future building.

The conference is cosponsored by the Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust and the Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania.

Inquiries should be addressed to: Mennonite Heritage Center, 565 Yoder Road, Box 82, Harleysville, PA 19438; by phone: (215) 256-3020; or by e-mail: mennhist@pond.com

Family History Conference—The Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society and the Lancaster County Historical Society will cosponsor the 19th annual Family History Conference, October 30-November 1, 1997, at the Holiday Inn/Lancaster Host Hotel & Conference Center, Lancaster, PA. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Arlene H. Eakle, an award-winning professional genealogist and teacher from Salt Lake City, Utah.

Eakle, president of the Genealogical Institute of Salt Lake City, will discuss "American Migrational Patterns" of cooperative and religious groups, including migration-oriented records. In addition, she will conduct three workshops: "Migrational Patterns into the Central United States," "Planning a Research Trip to Your Place of Origin," and "Evaluating Genealogical Evidence." Other speakers will conduct nearly twenty other workshops on varied aspects of genealogical research.

The event features guided bus tours for research to Washington, D.C., and Chester County, Pa., facilities, exhibitors, on-site photographic reproduction, choice of concurrent sessions, and individualized research consultations. In addition, participants will receive information on area historical attractions, a registrant research roster, and optional lunch and Lancaster County-style banquet.

A program and further registration details are available from Lola M. Lehman, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602-1499 (include self-addressed, stamped envelope). Phone: (717) 393-9745; FAX: (717) 393-8751. Registration deadline is October 15.

Hochstetler Family Is Focus of Annual Meeting—

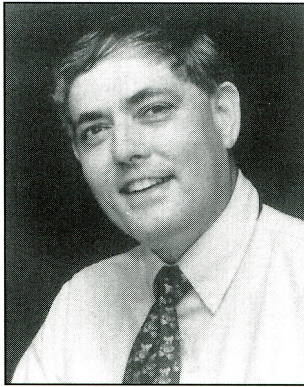
The history of the Hochstetler family of Somerset County, Pa., is the focus of the annual meeting of the Casselman River Area Amish and Mennonite Historians of Grantsville, Md., this year. The public is invited to this meeting at the Grace Brethren Church, in the village of Summit Mills, 2 miles southwest of Meyersdale, Pa., on Mt. Davis Rd., September 19, 20, 1997.

The annual meeting speakers are Daniel E. Hochstetler, Goshen, Ind.; J. Virgil Miller, Sarasota, Fla.; Alta Schrock, Grantsville, Md.; and David I. Miller, Irwin, Ohio.

The program includes input on the Hochstetler European origins, their eastern Pennsylvania experiences (including the massacre), the spread west to Somerset County and beyond, Summit Mills experiences of the line of John Hochstetler who pioneered from Berks County to Somerset County, Pa., and the history of the village of Summit Mills and its Amish and Brethren churches. A tour is offered to local sites of Hochstetler history. A printed program and other information are available by writing or calling The Casselman Historians at PO Box 591, Grantsville, MD 21536. Phone 301-895-4488

A Mennonite Journal—A newly-discovered journal kept by Jacob R. Hildebrand of northern Augusta Co., Virginia, during the Civil War is now in publication. *A Mennonite Journal, 1862-1865: A Father's Account of the Civil War in the Shenandoah Valley* "provides an unparalleled glimpse into a Mennonite home that was very involved in the Confederate cause." Editor John R. Hildebrand provides genealogical background for the family as well as information about persons frequently mentioned. The volume concludes with a number of appendices, endnotes, and an index. The book is available from Burd Street Press, Division of White

Mane Publishing Co., 63 West Burd St., Shippensburg, PA 17257. Published in 1996, it contains 100 pages. The cost is \$9.95 plus S & H —\$4/first book, \$1/each additional copy.



Keith L. Sprunger.

Credit: Communications Dept., EMU.

Harry A. Brunk Scholar Award—The Menno Simons Historical Library at Eastern Mennonite University has announced the recipient of the third annual Harry A. Brunk Scholar Award.

Keith L. Sprunger of N. Newton, Kan., will use the \$2,000 award to help fund a study of Mennonite printing activities in Holland during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Dr. Sprunger, who is working on a book-length history of Mennonite printing in the Netherlands and America, is Oswald H. Wedel professor of history at Bethel College, N. Newton, where he has taught since 1963. He received a bachelor's degree from Wheaton (Ill.) College and master's and doctor's degrees from the University of Illinois.

As part of his research, Sprunger will focus on Mennonite attitudes toward the use of printing, develop a working list of Dutch Mennonite printers and a list of books they produced during the 17th and 18th centuries, and analyze how minority groups like the Anabaptists used the printing press to further their Reformation goals.

"The Netherlands is one of two

major centers of Mennonite printing, the other being North America," the historian noted in his research proposal. "Although various studies have recognized the connection between the Reformation and printing, especially in the Lutheran and Reformed movements, not much has been done on printing activities during the Radical Reformation, which deserves an equally careful study," he added.



Authors Samuel Horst and Mary Sprunger. Credit: Communications Dept., EMU

Two New Books from EMU—Two Eastern Mennonite University faculty members were recognized for recently published books at a reception in their honor the Jan. 10 in EMU's Campus Center.

Mary Sprunger, assistant professor of history, coauthored *Menno Simons: Places, Portraits, and Progeny* with Piet Visser of the University of Amsterdam. Dr. Sprunger wrote her dissertation on 17th century Dutch Mennonites and taught a fall semester course at EMU on Dutch Mennonite history.

The Sprunger-Visser work is a cooperative project of EMU, the University of Amsterdam, and Mennonite Publishing House, Scottsdale, Pa. The 160-page book contains numerous reproductions of paintings, engravings, photographs, and maps and is available in separate English, Dutch, and German editions.

Samuel L. Horst, professor emeritus of history, wrote *The Fire of Liberty in their Hearts: The Diary of Jacob E. Yoder*, published by the Virginia State Library. Dr. Horst, who taught at EMU for 28 years until his retirement, edited the journals of Jacob Eschbach Yoder, an idealistic young Mennonite from Pennsylvania who came to Virginia after the Civil War to help educate freed slaves. Yoder taught freedmen in Lynchburg and administered such schools in the greater Lynchburg area, 1868-70, and taught blacks in the newly launched public schools in Lynchburg from 1871 until his death in 1905.

FROM HEART TO HAND



DISCOVERING
BUCKS COUNTY
FRaktur

Baptismal Certificate for Isaac Weaver.
Credit: Mercer Museum

Mercer Museum Plans Landmark Fraktur Exhibit—The first-ever museum exhibition devoted exclusively to Bucks County Fraktur—

the colorful, hand-decorated manuscripts of the Pennsylvania Germans—is slated to open at the Mercer Museum, Doylestown, Pa., on Saturday, September 13. The exhibit marks the centennial anniversary of museum founder Henry Mercer's original study of fraktur art and artists, and of his groundbreaking collection of early Americana, begun in 1897.

The new exhibit, entitled "From Heart to Hand: Discovering Bucks County Fraktur," will include over 200 examples of Fraktur and related artifacts. In addition to the museum's own collection, pieces of Fraktur from more than 20 major public and private collections are expected to be featured. All of the chief forms of fraktur will be represented, including decorated baptismal certificates, writing samples, house blessings, bookplates, and religious manuscripts. Some pieces will be returning to Pennsylvania from as far away as Canada, having been transported there nearly two centuries ago by Bucks County Mennonite settlers.

Group tours to see the show may be arranged through the Mercer Museum's Education Department. Interested parties may call 215-345-0210 ext. 23 for information, rates, and available times. Special programs related to the exhibit will be scheduled on weekends throughout the fall.

The Mercer Museum of the Bucks County Historical Society, featuring 50,000 objects of America's pre-industrial past, is located at 84 South Pine Street in Doylestown. The museum is open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Mondays through Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and noon to 5:00 p.m. on Sundays. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4.50 for senior citizens, and \$1.50 for youth.


Bucks County Fraktur

Symposium—In conjunction with a major exhibition devoted exclusively to Bucks County Fraktur, the

Mercer Museum will present an educational symposium on Saturday, October 25, 1997. The day-long program will feature a series of lectures and a panel discussion exploring the educational, religious, and artistic dimensions of Bucks County Fraktur.

Speakers will include some of the foremost scholars on Pennsylvania-German history, culture, and folk-life. Delivering the keynote address will be Dr. Gerard C. Wertkin, director of the Museum of American Folk Art, New York City.

In a diverse series of presentations, speakers will focus on the historical context in which Bucks County Fraktur was produced, as well as on the work of the schoolmaster-artists and scribes who worked within the county's boundaries. Each of the talks will form the basis for a series of illustrated essays in the upcoming book *Bucks County Fraktur*, to be published jointly by the Bucks County Historical Society and the Pennsylvania German Society.

The registration fee for the symposium is \$55 for members of the Bucks County Historical Society, and \$65 for nonmembers. The fee includes the symposium, admission to the museum and exhibit, lunch, an evening reception, and the opportunity to view several related public programs during the course of the day. Copies of the book "Bucks County Fraktur" will also be offered at a special pre-publication price. To receive a registration brochure, call (215) 345-0210, ext. 28. 

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Miller, Edwin D., *Millers Family History and Descendants of Henry B. Miller*. Published by author, 1996. Pp. 281. \$15. Order from author: 1441 Kennedy St NW, Washington, DC 20011.

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Sawatzky, Reynold, *Sawatzky-Klassen Ancestry Family History*. Goshen, IN: Published by author, 1996. Pp. 178. Order from author: 1526 Greencroft, Goshen, IN 46526.

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More information on these books may be obtained from the Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College, Goshen, IN 46526; (219) 535-7418; e-mail: janetss@goshen.edu.

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"All Believers": Reflections on the History of the General Conference Mennonite Church

by Steve Estes



*All Believers, fathers, mothers,
As well as children, sisters, brothers,
Be always loyal to the LORD.
Do not allow anything or anybody
To separate you from the LORD,
Whom we know,
Follow Him, our morning star.*



This is the first verse of a poem originally composed in German by Henry Ellenberger (1784-1869), a Mennonite minister ordained in 1812. In 1850, at the age of 66 years, Ellenberger left the Rhenish Palatinate in Germany and migrated to Lee County, Iowa.¹

There on the prairies of Iowa, with people like Henry Ellenberger and with a conviction to "be always loyal to the LORD," the General Conference Mennonite Church began. Those South German settlers in southeastern Iowa had been part of the South German Mennonite Conference. In 1853 two little Mennonite congregations at West Point and Franklin Prairie decided they needed something like it and adopted a common constitution. On March 21, 1859, they were prompted by an urgent sense of call to accomplish something for home and foreign missions. They recognized that only in united action could good results in mission be secured. They made plans to have a meeting on the second day of

Pentecost, 1860, in the German Methodist Church in West Point, Iowa. Other Mennonite churches were invited "for the purpose of considering ways and means for the unification of all Mennonites of North America."²

As one of the leaders, Jacob Krehbiel I (1802-1864)³ said:

May the Lord lend his blessing to this small beginning, that eventually a common bond of brotherhood bind all our Mennonite communities to work in unity that the brethren living in isolation may receive the pure gospel.

John Oberholtzer (1809-1895) was a minister who separated from the Franconia Conference in 1847 and founded the East Pennsylvania Conference of the Mennonite Church. Since 1856 he had advocated a "union of all the [Mennonite] churches in America."⁴ He published an announcement about the upcoming meeting in his periodical, *Das Christliche Volksblatt*, on April 20, 1859. He rejoiced that the western brothers and sisters were seeking to "blow the ashes from the glimmering coals that the flame of the Lord may appear."⁵

The next year "Father Oberholtzer" traveled the hundreds of miles from Pennsylvania to Iowa to attend and chair the first session of the General Conference Mennonite Church held on May 28-29, 1860. The day before was Pentecost⁶ and someone described the moving communion service

*All Believers, fathers, mothers,
As well as children, sisters, brothers,
Be always loyal to the LORD.
Do not allow anything or anybody
To separate you from the LORD,
Whom we know,
Follow Him, our morning star.*

held that day:

In observance of that occasion and as preparation for the unification deliberations that were to begin on the day following, the Lord's Supper was celebrated. The visitors from abroad [the Pennsylvanians, that is] also took part. To be assembled under those peculiar circumstances could not fail to bring the hearts of those sincere Christians into closer fellowship; being consciously reminded that all have but one and the same Lord.

The first resolution of this meeting of five little congregations declared: "That all branches of the Mennonite denomination in North America, regardless of minor differences, should extend to each other the hand of fellowship."⁷ And "all who hold to the fundamental doctrine of our confession, reach to

each other the hand of fellowship and overlook those minor points wherein salvation is not to be found."⁸

This was the basis of unification: "the fundamental doctrines of the denomination . . . which we with Menno base solely upon the Gospel as received from our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles."⁹ The union was to be conformable to 1 Corinthians 12:12-27: "All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it!"¹⁰

And the reason for this union? "That hereafter Home and Foreign Mission shall be carried on according to ability by our denomination!" And education and publication were to resource this united church for its mission.¹¹

"Unification for mission!" could have been their motto. With this vision for mission the "hand of fellowship" extends across the trajectory of these 137 years from a few South Germans and Pennsylvanians to a Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Winnipeg; from the prairies of Iowa to the sub-continent of India and beyond.

After the first conference in 1860, John Carl Krehbiel (1811-1886)¹² wrote of his attendance there:

I must confess that the pentecostal days which our heavenly father permitted us to enjoy will remain as an especially bright place in my memory of the past. For seemingly we were taken by the unifying spirit of God and together

The *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* is published quarterly by the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church and distributed to the members of the Mennonite Church Historical Association.

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Microfilms of Volumes I-L of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* are available from: University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

lifted to Tabor's height. Who would censure us for being filled with the wish to stay the flow of time, saying with the disciples: "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

The flow of time is not stayed. God's Spirit is still at work among us. It is good for us to be the General Conference Mennonite Church. It is good for us to be wherever it is that God leads. The bright places of our memories of what it means for us to be the General Conference Mennonite Church are bright because of the places in which the flame of the Lord glimmers in our churches, reflecting the light of the morning star.

When Henry Ellenberger wrote of Jesus Christ as the morning star, he surely knew that the same planet that we see as the morning star is also the one that we see as the evening star. And in this time of the General Conference Mennonite Church, Jesus Christ is the evening star leading us to new life. He is giving us these "pentecostal days" in which to be loyal to him and is sharing with us the unity of his spirit that we are "all Christ's body, and each one is a part of it." Jesus Christ is giving us the opportunity to extend the hand of fellowship a little further in the Mennonite family, and is reminding us that we have "but one and the same Lord." He is challenging us to extend the "hand of fellowship" a little bit further to our neighbors, to the stranger, and to the enemy. He is reminding us to remember and proclaim the glorious deeds of the Lord, that we are being transformed in Christ. We have a mission that we cannot do alone: to proclaim salvation—a salvation that we proclaim by being "Christ's body and each one is a part of it." This is the mission that we live when we "follow Him, our morning star." AMEN. 

—Steve Estes presented this meditation at a communion service at the General Conference Triennial Session, Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 6, 1997.

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Notes

1. Howard Raid, *Henry Ellenberger: Pastor, Poet, Pioneer, Organizer of the Zion Mennonite Church, 1851* (Bluffton, Ohio: Howard Raid, 1976) gives a succinct and informative account of the life and ministry of Henry Ellenberger. Ten of his poems are included in English translation. The verse quoted here is from the poem "Words of Farewell," which was originally printed in the *Friedensboten*.
2. H. P. Krehbiel, *The History of the General Conference of the Mennonites of North America* (Canton, Ohio: published by the author, 1898), pp. 30, 53; Samuel Floyd Pannabecker, *Open Doors: The History of the General Conference Mennonite Church*, Mennonite Historical Series, no. 11 (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1975), pp. 42-44. The Franklin Prairie congregation is now the Zion Mennonite Church, Donnellson, Iowa. The West Point congregation discontinued in the 1880s.
3. *Das Christliche Volksblatt*, 20 April 1859, p. 78; quoted in Krehbiel, *History of the General Conference*, p. 35; and in Pannabecker, *Open Doors*, p. 45.
4. Krehbiel, *History of the General Conference*, pp. 20-21, gives an English translation of John H. Oberholtzer's proposal that appeared in the editorial columns of *Das Christliche Volksblatt* in 1856.
5. *Das Christliche Volksblatt*, 20 April 1859, p. 78, quoted in Pannabecker, *Open Doors*, p. 45.
6. Krehbiel, *History of the General Conference*, p. 52. John H. Oberholtzer is referred to as "Father Oberholtzer" in Cornelius J. Dyck's book, *Twelve Becoming: Biographies of Mennonite Disciples from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, (Newton, Kansas: Faith & Life Press, 1973), pp. 48-49.
7. Krehbiel, *History of the General*

Conference, p. 56; Pannabecker, *Open Doors*, p. 47. There is some controversy as to the actual number of congregations represented at the conference. Krehbiel, *History of the General Conference*, includes a "Table Showing What Churches Were in Conference at Each Session, 1859-1896" between pp. 398 and 399 that indicates four congregations attended: Zion (Franklin Prairie), West Point, and Polk City in Iowa and West Swamp in Pennsylvania. Cornelius Krahn and John F. Schmidt, eds., *A Century of Witness: The General Conference Mennonite Church* (Newton, Kansas: Mennonite Publication Office, 1959), p. 23, states that there is evidence that S. B. Bauman from Ontario also attended. That would mean five churches were represented. Enos Loux accompanied John H. Oberholtzer from Pennsylvania.

8. Pannabecker, *Open Doors*, p. 49.
9. Krehbiel, *History of the General Conference*, p. 56, from Article 2 of the plan of union.
10. One Corinthians 12:27 from Good News Bible: Today's English Version (New York: American Bible Society, 1992), p. 1674.
11. Krehbiel, *History of the General Conference*, pp. 56, 59-60.
12. Krehbiel, *History of the General Conference*, pp. 63-64.

"Der Weiss" Jonas Stutzmann: Amish Pioneer and Mystic

by Greg Hartzler-Miller

Jonas Stutzmann¹ (1788-1871) was an Amish homesteader, the first non-Indian to settle in what is now eastern Holmes County, Ohio. In his later years, mystical experiences led him to announce "the approaching kingdom of God on earth." He wrote and published pamphlets in English and German. Likewise, he expressed himself through symbolic acts: he built a "chair for Jesus" and he dressed in all-white clothes, earning the nickname "Der Weiss"—The White One. In spite of his eccentricities, he remained a member of the Amish church of Walnut Creek.

Jonas was a child of movers. Early in their marriage, his parents, Jacob and Anna (Yoder) Stutzmann, moved from eastern Pennsylvania across the Susquehanna River and Allegheny Mountains to the Casseleman River Amish settlement, where their children were born: first Paul, then Jonas, Jost, Jacob, and Christian.¹

In the spring of 1809, Jonas, 21 years old and single, followed his parents' example by joining the westward migration. Jonas traveled with the family of his paternal aunt, Anna (Stutzman) Miller. Her husband was an Amish minister, Jacob Miller. The previous summer, Jacob Miller and two of his sons had built a cabin. They had begun to farm on the headwaters of the Muskingum near what is now Sugarcreek in Tuscarawas County, Ohio. In 1809, when they brought their spouses and children to Ohio, Jonas accompanied them.

Traveling with a Conestoga wagon pulled by a six-horse team,² they journeyed approximately 150 miles. They followed the only road suitable for wagon travel then: Forbes Road through Pittsburgh.³ Tradition has it that upon their arrival they constructed a second shelter in one day. Then on Sunday, they conducted a worship service with Jacob Miller preaching a sermon, the first by an Amish minister in Ohio.⁴

That summer Jonas scouted the

surrounding wilderness and began construction of his own cabin on a knoll three-quarters of a mile south-west of Walnut Creek. "He chose an ideal site for a settlement," wrote local historian Leroy Beachy:

Large oaks abounded along with an unusual amount of large walnut trees. Walnut is a very workable wood and was highly favored for cabin building. From his chosen spot Jonas had a view, in four directions, over valleys which because of periodic flooding were practically treeless but waist high in buffalo grass. An Indian trail connected his site with the Miller homes, five miles to the east. The three streams that met near the center of his tract would furnish ample water power for a future sawmill. A good strong spring flowed just off to the side of his cabin. What else besides God's providence would a man desire?⁵

In October 1809, this site became a place of personal ordeal for Jonas. The story was passed down as follows:

When Jonas was felling trees to clear a place for a cabin he had an accident. A limb from a tree Jonas was cutting was sprung. As he cut the branch, it kicked back and broke his leg above the knee. He was miles away from the Jacob Millers at Sugarcreek, with whom he lived. Being autumn, it was beginning to get cold at night and he had no blanket. With no help in sight, Jonas cut thin willows from near the creek, tied up his broken leg, then, making a crutch and cane from sticks, he slowly and



The farm of Der Weiss with the Walnut Creek Mennonite Church in the background. Credit: The Mennonite Information Center.

painfully worked his way back the long five miles. When he arrived late that night, he was put into Jacob Miller's own bed. Jacob set the leg and Jonas recovered.⁶

Jonas persevered on the land and soon other Amish people, many of them relatives, joined him creating a network of community support.⁷ Early in 1812, after three years in Ohio as a bachelor, Jonas married Marie Gerber from the Amish settlement in Stark County, Ohio; the same year, Jonas's immediate family took residence nearby.⁸

The Stutzmanns needed community moral support, for the summer of 1812 was marked by "the Tecumseh scare."⁹ Throughout the Midwest, the Shawnee chief Tecumseh was rallying Indians against whites. At the same time, the Greentown Indians from the Mohican River Valley (just west of Holmes County) were forcibly removed by the U.S. Army and fear spread that they might retaliate. Consequently, western migration from Pennsylvania slowed and some Holmes County settlers returned east.¹⁰

Through bartering, the Amish settlers of Walnut Creek were generally able to keep peace with the few Indians in their immediate vicinity.¹¹ However, the uncanny story of Tom Lions demonstrates that underlying conflict persisted. During the French and Indian War, Lions was among a band of Delaware and Shawnee Indians who attacked the household of Jacob Hochstetler in the Northkill Amish Settlement of Berks County, Pennsylvania.¹² The incident, well known in Amish circles as the "Hostetler massacre," occurred on September 19, 1757: Hochstetler's wife and two youngest children were killed; he and two of his sons were taken captive.¹³

Over fifty years later, the early settlers in Walnut Creek found Tom Lions wandering from place to place in the region. Lions became

notorious because, when he was drunk, he reveled in recounting gruesome details of raids.¹⁴ Sometimes he threatened similar violence toward settlers who refused to barter.¹⁵ Such threats and war stories shocked listeners who sympathized with the plight of the Jacob Hochstetler family. Lions' violent talk surely must have upset Jonas Stutzmann, since Jacob Hostetler was Jonas's great-grandfather.¹⁶

Tom Lions disappeared mysteriously around 1820. The stream near Berlin where his hut stood is known to this day as Lions Run.¹⁷ In the spring of 1824, the last six Indians who lived near the Amish settlement were removed by U.S. soldiers.¹⁸

Any organized threat from Indians ended in October, 1813, when Tecumseh was killed in battle. Like their non-Amish neighbors, the Amish moved west without apprehension as land became available. A letter written in 1817 by the recent immigrant, Hans Nussbaum, shows that the Stutzmanns played a role in promoting Amish settlement in Ohio:

On the 27th (October 1817) Schrag and I and his son went [from Somerset County, Pennsylvania] to Ohio to find a new fatherland. We went via Pittsburg (sic), New Washington, Steubenville, to Walnut Creek where there is also an Amish settlement. On the 6th of Dec., we stayed overnight with a man named Stutzman (sic) who owns 900 acres of land.¹⁹ On Dec. 9, we came to Wooster to an Amish community. The brethren here went with us to choose land.²⁰

The Stutzmanns appear in the letter as successful, hospitable brethren, willing and able to help new settlers find land.

Jonas and Marie had at least eight children: Elias, Anna, Sarah, Jacob, Christian, David, Daniel, and Elizabeth.²¹ Possibly another child

was born and died in infancy, for Jonas's obituary states that he was the father of nine children.²² Marie died, leaving Jonas a single parent of four or five children under 18. Sometime before 1842 Jonas married a woman whose first name was Catherine.²³ The 1850 U.S. Census, providing a glimpse into Jonas's household eight years after his second marriage, recorded the following data:

Jonas Stutzmann, 62, with real estate valued at \$8000, birthplace, Pennsylvania;

Catherine, 62, birthplace, Pennsylvania; Christian, 23, laborer, birthplace, Ohio;

David, 20, laborer, birthplace, Ohio; Daniel, 18, laborer, birthplace, Ohio;

Elizabeth, 18, birthplace, Ohio.²⁴

This was the composition of Jonas' household when, in 1850, he began publishing.

Jonas Stutzmann in Print

A letter from Jonas Stutzmann appeared in *The Canton Repository*, the Canton, Ohio, newspaper on July 25, 1849. The editor, H. J. Nothnagel, introduced it with a partial disclaimer: "A few days since a venerable looking old gentleman called at our office, and requested us to publish the following—which we do to gratify him—merely promising, that whether the prediction or warning prove true or not—we believe all ought to prepare to meet our God."²⁵

In his letter, *First Appeal to All Men*, dated July 19, 1849, Jonas described himself as 62 years of age, "an old and unlettered man." He explained that he had been experiencing prophetic revelations for two and one-half years, that is, since the winter of 1846-1847. He had felt unable to express himself "by word of mouth or pen"; however, his

impetus to publish intensified in the spring of 1849, when he became convinced that the fulfillment of biblical prophecy would come about "within the ensuing 4 years." He advised his audience to read the biblical prophets and Revelation "with earnestness and diligence," and to await his "further disclosures upon this all important topic."²⁶

Although no further letters from Jonas Stutzmann appeared in *The Canton Repository*, in 1850 a 28-page booklet of Jonas's writings was "printed for the author" by the newspaper editor, H. J. Nothnagel. The booklet reprinted *First Appeal to All Men* as it appeared previously in the newspaper, followed by *Second Appeal to All Men* that, according to Jonas was also a reprint.²⁷ The first and second appeals, both with less than a thousand words, are relatively brief compared to the third appeal with over eight thousand words. The title page of the booklet read *First, Second and Third/ Appeals to All Men/ to Prepare/ for the Approaching Kingdom of God upon Earth/ Commonly Called "The Millennium."*

By explaining in the title that his appeals refer to something "commonly called 'the millennium,'" Jonas seems to display an awareness that millennial prophecy was widespread. He was writing in the wake of the most well-known example of millennial excitement in American religious history—the Millerite movement of the 1830s and 1840s. Propelled by the belief that Christ would return around 1843, Baptist preacher William Miller and his disciples utilized tracts, prophecy conferences, and tent services to win followers across New England, upstate New York, and the upper Midwest. Their specific date for Christ's return, October 22, 1844, became known afterward as the "Great Disappointment."²⁸ Although there is no evidence that Stutzmann was directly influenced by the Millerites, he shared with them a willingness to predict the time of Christ's

return.

Consistent with his decision to submit *First Appeal* to a newspaper and his decision to write in English, Jonas intended to communicate beyond the boundaries of the Amish church. Thus in *Second Appeal* he wrote,

I wish to warn every man . . . for the Lord is the Sovereign over all the world and not only over one single nation . . . all men are created equally through and by him . . . he is not the God of one people—religion, sect or party—but the father of all.²⁹

Gender inclusiveness was emphasized in the opening of *Third Appeal to All Men*. As if to stress that "men" in his title referred to people, male and female, he followed it with an inclusive salutation: "Brethren and sisters!" He developed the theme in his opening paragraph: "You all are my actual brothers and sisters, springing together from one original father . . . thirsting after a love and happiness."³⁰

Jonas extolled the Christian doctrine as the necessary moral influence for bringing the kingdom of God to earth:

For he [Christ] was not come, to call down the eternal glories and beatitudes of heaven suddenly and at once, as if it were by an incomprehensible spell of magic, upon this earth . . . but [Christ came] that the truth and the divine nature of his doctrine should by its own energy, power, and beauty, conquer for itself a path, and gain influence upon the human heart and mind, and thus during the course of long centuries bring humanity into a conflict with the errors and falsehoods . . . [until] he would commence to erect his own eternal kingdom on earth.³¹

To those who would doubt the possibility of such a transformation,

Jonas cited the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Luke 11:2). If Jesus, knowing "God's eternal design," taught this prayer, then, Jonas argued it was an "absolute certainty" that the kingdom would come "at one time, or another."³²

He then described the community of love which would live within God's kingdom, and warned of the consequences of idolatry. Pain and suffering would be God's penalty, aimed at restoring the idolater through repentance. Ironically, following his discussion of idolatry and repentance, Stutzmann engaged in a form of speculation he might later see as his own idolatry—the attempt to set the date of Christ's return. *Second Appeal* and *Third Appeal* were dated, November 22, 1849. In "On the Time," Jonas indicated that this was a significant date for him: "The time of preparation . . . has commenced on the twenty second of November, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine, and will last yet 1290 days." Jonas gave no particular rationale for the choice of November 22, 1849, as a starting point. Apparently he believed that *Second Appeal* and *Third Appeal*, completed on that date, were God's instruments, prophetic invitations, inaugurating a "time of preparation."

Stutzmann's audacious claims are based on a belief in his own prophetic role. He saw himself as a modern Noah. This self-concept is evident in his rather esoteric discussion of the anticipated transition from mortality to immortality. He began with a quotation from the apostle Paul: "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye . . . this mortal shall put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-53)." A corresponding reference to immortality is gleaned from *The Wandering Soul*, a book by an Anabaptist writer that was circulated widely among the Amish. From

the book's fictional dialogue between Adam and Noah,³³ Jonas notes a reference to Enoch who, without dying "became immortal on account of his righteousness."³⁴ Jonas then claimed not only that the same immortality was available to all; he also made the following declaration: "What Paul has seen as a mystery . . . shall now become manifest through me. . . ." Apparently, Jonas anticipated many of his contemporaries becoming immortal without dying physically and believed that he himself had been granted a pioneering role in this process of transformation.

As a prelude to the transformation, Stutzmann prophesied that humanity would "yet remain three years spiritually dead in the grave" and at the consummation of that time would "be roused to become denizens of the new Jerusalem." The three years of spiritual death were for Jonas analogous to the three days that Christ was in the grave, the three days Jonah was in the belly of the whale, and the four days Lazarus was in the grave. Praying that everyone's eyes would be opened to this reality, Jonas advised his readers to "wrestle with, pray, cry to the Lord for wisdom."

Stutzmann used what he called "the science of numbers," and he believed that the number three pointed to "the great mystery of the divine being." He explained his thinking as follows:

In the same manner in which God has bound the empire of nature created by him to the laws of time, we also find that in his kingdom of grace, certain numbers, cyphers, specified portions and divisions . . . That in the science of numbers there lies hidden a secret, profound, and divine significance was believed not only by the sages of Israel but even amongst those of the pagans, as is well known of Pythagoras and his school, and at a later period of Plato and others. For this reason

we find that certain numbers occur so frequently in holy writ.³⁵

In the 19th century, mathematical proficiency was increasingly a culturally valued skill disseminated through almanacs and by the public schools. Like the Millerites before him, Jonas applied his mathematical proficiencies to the elucidation of numerological mysteries. Jonas linked his three-year "time of preparation" to the "1290 mystical days of Daniel" (Dan. 12:11). He also noticed in Revelation 12:6 that "the solar woman stays in the wilderness" for 1260 days. By taking these 1260 days and adding "30 prophetic days"—a spiritual gestation period—he was able again to arrive at Daniel's 1290 days.

In the final section of *Third Appeal*, titled "Preachers and Parents!" Jonas denounced the denominational churches, asserting that they should be dismantled:

First to you, ye Preachers of the different denominations! You have to quit the congregations under your charge as well as the care for the youth. Cease with preaching and administering the Lord's Supper. . . . As long as ye are not born again, ye steal and adulterate the word of God, as has been shown to me in the spirit.³⁶

In Jonas's mind, this suspension of preaching and administering the Lord's Supper was dynamic equivalent of suspension of the "daily sacrifice" mentioned in Daniel: "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished . . . there will be 1290 days" (Dan. 12:11).

While advising pastors to step down, Jonas placed additional responsibility on parents:

Take to heart my admonitions, give back the children to their parents, that they may be taught by their fathers according to the example of Tobias, that they be

exercised in prayer and repentance (sic).³⁷

The reference to Tobias comes from the book of Tobit in the Old Testament Apocrypha. In some Amish churches, it is customary to tell the story of Tobias in wedding sermons, indicating how Tobias carefully obeyed his father's instructions in obtaining a wife of his own tribe. Jonas cited the story of Tobias as an example of a parent taking responsibility for the instruction of a child.

The pamphlet concludes with a request for correspondence:

All those individuals who sincerely and seriously desire to take an active interest in the great cause of God are hereby requested to inform me thereof in post-paid letters, in which they also may advise me somewhat more in detail of the various circumstances of their situation, in order to enable me thereby to perceive more clearly and judge more correctly - how - where - and in what manner their co-operation may be rendered most available for the promotion of this holy cause. Please direct to: Jonas Stutzmann, Walnut (sic) Creek Post Office, Holmes County, Ohio.³⁸

We do not know whether Stutzmann received favorable response from readers; at any rate, he continued writing. His next known pamphlet, *Sendschreiben*, was written in German and dated, September 4, 1852. In his closing paragraph, Jonas wrote, "I appeal to you now in all earnestness and solemnity for the fifth time."³⁹ Presumably, after the first, second, and third appeals, there was a fourth appeal (lost) which preceded *Sendschreiben*, a fifth appeal.

In *Sendschreiben*, he added significant details regarding his unusual religious experiences. Specifically, he gave an account of nine mystical visions or revelations introduced as

follows: "I was transported in rapture nine times in which the following was clearly shown to me and placed before my soul."⁴⁰

The first three revelations have an evangelical tone:

The first time it was made clear to me that whoever submits himself to the word of God, learns it and keeps it faithfully will be protected from death, curse and hell.

The second time it was shown to me that as long as we continue in sin, we are dead and under the lordship of the devil, who is a murderer.

The third time it was revealed that God is no respecter of persons, but rather that all people are the same and that I should therefore send my appeal to all persons without exception.⁴¹

The fourth and fifth revelations are consistent with the Amish practice of plain dress and nonsalaried ministry:

The fourth time it was made known to me that all colorful, checkered, and striped clothing is of the flesh.

The fifth time what I glimpsed in the spirit caused me great grief. The word of God is most lamentably proclaimed by many preachers solely for the sake of filthy profit.⁴²

The sixth revelation has a spiritualist or mystical tone:

The sixth time I saw a great light and then a great darkness; the great joy in the new Jerusalem and the great sorrow among humanity; that is the great power and the great weakness of humans.⁴³

The seventh revelation is critical of behavior tolerated in the Amish church of Jonas's time:

The seventh time it was disclosed to me that three pieces are not spiritual, namely short round-

abouts, dancing and frolicking and the use of tobacco.⁴⁴

Leroy Beachy, commenting on the parallel passage in *Appeals*, wrote that the "short round-about" was a "factory-made, waist-length, tight fitting jacket that was the rage just prior to the Civil War period."⁴⁵ In his use of the word "frolic," Jonas surely does not mean to condemn such community mutual aid as barn-raising and husking bees; instead, by associating frolicking with dancing and tobacco use, Jonas was referring to gatherings where uninhibited whiskey consumption led to "frivolity, foolish jesting, and prankishness." It seems Jonas was ahead of his peers in this concern. In the late 1800s, the deacon of the Walnut Creek congregation, Abraham Mast, reported an ongoing struggle to eliminate the use of alcohol and tobacco by members.⁴⁶

The eighth and ninth revelations both predicted the return of Christ:

The eighth time it was revealed to me that the time is at hand, that in the sixth month of the fifty-third year, the Lord will prepare the great banquet on Mount Zion.

The ninth time it was made known to me in the spirit that the coming of God's kingdom is near. . . . I therefore feel compelled once again to send this repeated appeal.⁴⁷

Symbolic Acts

Even as Jonas Stutzmann wrote and distributed pamphlets, normal life passages continued in his household. His youngest child, Elizabeth, married at age 21 on November 15, 1852. The wedding was only two months after the publication of *Sendschreiben*, and seven months prior to Jonas's anticipated return of Christ.⁴⁹ While it seems his children blended into the community, Stutzmann became legendary for

his eccentric behavior in later life.

Jonas was a craftsman, and he made many wooden chairs known locally as "Stutzman chairs."⁵⁰ Some of these chairs remain intact today. According to oral tradition, in his later years, Jonas moved from house to house making chairs for his hosts. In keeping with the technique of the day, he made chairs without nails. Joints were secured by fitting dry wood into wood not fully cured. Over time, shrinkage fastened the joint.

Jonas made one chair significantly larger than the others. The seat was 24 inches from the floor. According to tradition, this was his "chair for Jesus." In *Appeals* and again in *Sendschreiben*, Jonas anticipated a time when Jesus would "erect his throne of divinely-human glory and govern everything with the power and wisdom given him by the father."⁵¹ Months and years passed with Jonas's humble wooden throne for Jesus remaining empty; nevertheless, the oversized chair is preserved to this day, a poignant symbol of disillusionment and pious longing.⁵²

In later life, Jonas was generally known as "Der Weiss" or "White Stutzmann," because he dressed in all-white clothes. Some report he even wore white shoes and a hat.⁵³ In a group that valued conformity, Jonas was not afraid to be different.⁵⁴ Although white fabric shows dirt, Jonas took pains to maintain a clean appearance. One Amishman related the following story:

One day in Stutzman's later years he came to a relative's place to visit, wearing nothing but white. When the woman of the house saw him, she went out to invite him in, but as the weather was nice and warm, he suggested they sit out under the shade trees. So she fetched chairs out from the house and invited him to sit down. He pulled a large white cloth from his coat pocket and thoroughly wiped the chair off before sitting down, although the chair had been clean.⁵⁵



meaning of white raiment, he wrote:

For only those who have washed and purified their clothes—that is, their thoughts, desires, wishes, inclinations, flesh and blood—in the blood of the lamb (which is Christ’s unspeakable love) are able to be a dwelling, a temple, a home for God.⁵⁹

Clearly, for Jonas, wearing all white was not a mere literalistic obedience or compulsion; in his

Left: Der Weiss and the Chair for Jesus: Anticipation in the midst of the drama of Behalt. Mural by Heinz Gaugel.

Credit: The Mennonite Information Center.

Below: Erma and David Stutzman of Berlin, Ohio, next to the Chair for Jesus. Erma is a descendant of Der Weiss Jonas Stutzman. Credit: The Mennonite Information Center.

According to another source, when Jonas was asked why he wore all white he said “the Lord put that color on sheep so he was going to wear it also.”⁵⁶ This explanation is consistent with his convictions on dress expressed in *Appeals*:

According to what I have seen in the spirit, there are but three colors for the children of God, viz: the fallow [beige], gray and white—the colors of eagles and sheep.⁵⁷

Sendschreiben offers further evidence of what Jonas intended to express with his choice of white clothes. In his introductory paragraphs Stutzmann identifies white garments with purity and with God’s presence: “The glory of God

shall dwell among us . . . so that we can say with Revelation 21:3: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with mortals, where all are gathered together who have washed and purified their garments.”⁵⁸ Later, in a plea for preparedness, he quotes Revelation 3:4-5: “Thou hast a few names which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.” Finally, in his most elaborate summary of the symbolic



mind, it was a symbol of inner transformation and prophetic zeal.

Jonas probably began wearing white during the two and one half years prior to writing *First Appeal*, for he experienced his revelations during that period. Tradition has it that he continued wearing white until his death, fully 18 years after the 1853 date he set for the return of Christ. Apparently, in spite of the failed timing of his prophecy, he continued to live in expectation of Christ's return, expressing his hope boldly in the symbol of all-white dress.

We have no written document from Jonas regarding his response to the apparent failure of his prophecy; however, a story is told that might be suggestive of his attitude. One day a man saw a perfectly operational grandfather clock in Jonas's pigsty. When he asked why the clock was in the pigsty, he was told simply that Jonas got a second clock and threw the first one away. The man rescued the older clock and preserved it.⁶⁰ Perhaps the bizarre treatment of his grandfather clock was symbolic of Jonas's attitude toward his misguided attempt to predict the *timing* of Jesus' return—it was fit for the pigsty.

Similarly, after 1853, Jonas probably destroyed any remaining copies of his pamphlets. If not for their accidental discovery, his writings would have been forgotten entirely. Appeals was found around 1970⁶¹ and *Sendschreiben* was found in the fall of 1994.⁶²

The desire for immortality is one of the central concerns Jonas expressed in his writings. He believed that with the coming of the kingdom of God on earth, he would pass into eternity without dying physically. The story of his last request demonstrates in a dramatic, if eccentric manner, that he was able to face his mortality.

Jonas' last request was that he be carried to his grave. Since he died at the home of his son, Daniel at Martin's Creek, seven

miles from the cemetery (Old Stutzman Cemetery), it posed a problem, but his wish was granted; two teams of pallbearers interchanged along the way.⁶³

His obituary appeared in *Herald of Truth*:

On the 18th of Oct. [1871], in Holmes Co., Ohio, Jonas Stutzman (*sic*), aged 83 yrs., 8 mo., and 18 days. He was the father of 9 children, 67 grand[children], and 41 great-grandchildren. Funeral discourse by Moses Miller and Abraham Mast.⁶⁴

Relationship to the Church

Tradition has it that Jonas remained a member in good standing in the Amish church of Walnut Creek. Jonas was not ordained, and one Amish historian speculates, "His peculiar views and dress were not seen as a threat to anyone, for he never had any followers."⁶⁵ Although there is no record of an organized movement inspired by Jonas, he indeed may have influenced some. His reference to the "profound bliss and unspeakable enjoyments" of friendship suggests that he had at least one close friend.⁶⁶ His ongoing relationship to the congregation was likely strengthened by his long-standing contribution to the community and a relatively tolerant attitude of the ministers.

During the time of Jonas's publishing activities, conflict was brewing among Amish leaders in Holmes County. Moses P. Miller, the bishop of the Walnut Creek congregation, was reputedly a strong leader and able speaker, but because he was open to innovation, or "change minded," he became a target of criticism from the more traditionalist members led by Levi Miller. The groups began to meet separately in 1852.⁶⁷ This local split

reflected tensions in the Amish church as a whole. A "Great Schism" (1848-1862) resulted in the formation of two separate groups—the Old Order Amish and the Amish Mennonite. In Walnut Creek, the "change minded" group, led by Moses P. Miller and Abraham Mast, eventually identified with the Amish Mennonite church.

It appears that Stutzmann participated in the "change minded" group, for his obituary states that his funeral discourse was conducted by Moses Miller and Abraham Mast.⁶⁸ However, this does not mean he agreed with all their innovations.

In 1862, the congregation decided to build its first meetinghouse. Nettie Glick's historical sketch points toward Jonas Stutzmann as an opponent of the move. The building committee, seeking a central location for their meetinghouse, chose "the southeast corner of the crossroad south of Walnut Creek [Township]."⁶⁹ However, they met with resistance: "the owner refused to part with the land if a church house was built on it. He threatened to burn it down, so the committee bought land from the next neighbor south, Jacob Stutzman."⁷⁰ To protect the reputation of the man who refused to sell, Glick withheld his name; however, the owner of the disputed land was probably Jacob Stutzman's next neighbor northeast of the creek, his brother Jonas.⁷¹

Traditionally, when Amish congregations became too large to gather in homes, they divided. This pattern kept congregations relatively small, enabling each member to know the others well and to maintain accountability. To accommodate growth through construction of a meeting house implied the formation of a larger, more impersonal, and less disciplined congregation. Wary of this tendency in large congregations, the traditionalists were *not* opposed to meetinghouses per se; rather, their objections were always to "large" meetinghouses.⁷²

Possibly, from Jonas

Stutzmann's perspective, the decision to build a meetinghouse represented a drift toward the congregational structure of "the different denominations," a structure he had opposed in his writings ten years earlier. He took the Amish ideal of the small congregation to an extreme—he advised denominational church pastors to resign and advocated that the Christian nurture of their youth be provided in the home by parents.⁷³ Jonas lamented the practices of salaried pastors who preached "solely for the sake of filthy profit."⁷⁴ He was also sharply critical of pastors who failed to act in accordance with their preaching. Using graphic metaphor, he warned such pastors, "Your people will become wood, and the fire in your mouth will devour them."⁷⁵ If 72-year-old Jonas used such language when the building committee asked for land, his words easily could have been construed as a threat to burn the meetinghouse.

Conclusion


Jonas Stutzmann's pioneering spirit was mirrored in his mystical impulses. In early adulthood, he staked his own claim in the wilderness of Ohio; in later life, after a series of personal visions and much reading, Jonas became convinced that he had staked a unique claim in the kingdom of God. As Jonas participated in the vanguard of a mass migration west, he also invited *all people* to prepare with him to become "denizens of the new Jerusalem."⁷⁶

Jonas set the stage for disappointment when he fixed a date for the return of Jesus. However, Jonas had already lived through his share of pain and grief: a broken leg and a five-mile journey for help; the specter of clashes with Indians embodied in Chief Tom Lions; the decision of his brother Jost to return east and join a non-Amish church; the death of his wife, Marie, with children still in the home; the death of his brother Christian in a "lunatic

asylum"; and discord between traditionalist and "change minded" factions in the Amish church.

Through adversity, Jonas had learned perseverance. When June 1853 passed and his "chair for Jesus" remained empty, Jonas continued his solitary witness, wearing all-white clothes. Perhaps he was dismissed as an eccentric, misunderstood and even pitied. However, he was also respected, so much so, that when he died at age 83, he was carried to his grave seven miles away, as he had requested on his deathbed. He died as member in good standing at the Walnut Creek Church.

The fascinating life story of Jonas Stutzmann, detailed above will of course be of interest to his many descendants. Jonas also played a significant role in the history of Holmes County. The German Culture Museum Board of Holmes County honored him in 1994 by placing a memorial stone at the presumed location of his bodily remains in the graveyard of Walnut Creek Mennonite Church.⁷⁷

Furthermore, Jonas Stutzmann's biography raises questions that merit scholarly attention.⁷⁸ What was Stutzmann's role within the Amish culture of his time? Within a culture suspicious of charismatic leadership and spiritualism, how did Stutzmann subvert or reinterpret traditional forms of religious expression? How should he be understood within the framework of Anabaptist-Mennonite history? Hans Hut set a date for the return of Christ—1535—and apocalyptic speculation influenced the Muenster uprising. Although successive generations of Anabaptist leaders tried to eradicate all hints of apocalypticism in later generations, it appeared again in the writings of Heinrich Jung-Stilling and in the so-called Great Trek of Claus Epp and his followers. Are there shared themes that emerge out of a shared Anabaptist theology and tradition? 

—Gregory Hartzler-Miller, a descendant of Jonas Stutzman, is intrigued by "holy fools." He currently lives in Lansing, Michigan, and is studying the life of St. Francis of Assisi.

Endnotes

¹Hochstetler, *Descendants of Barbara Hochstetler*, 678; J. Virgil Miller, "Grandson Jacob Stutzman (DBH 10146) and His Family," *Hochstetler-Hochstetler-Hochstetler Family Newsletter* (December 1993), 8-9.

²Ibid., 16.

³From 1758 to 1818, Forbes Road was the only wagon road to Ohio. See George Shumway, *Conestoga Wagon, 1750-1850: Freight Carrier for 100 Years of America's Westward Expansion* (York, PA: Trimmer Printing, Inc., 1964), 67.

⁴Nettie Glick, *Historical Sketch of the Walnut Creek, Ohio, Amish Mennonite Church* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1933), 3.

⁵Leroy Beachy, "The Amish Churches of Holmes County," in *Sesquicentennial History of New Carlisle and Walnut Creek Township*, ed. A. Roscoe Miller (Strasburg, OH: Atkinson Printing, 1977), 7.

⁶Betty Miller, *Amish Pioneers of The Walnut Creek Valley* (Wooster, OH: Atkinson Printing, 1977), 7.

⁷Beachy, "Settling the Valley," 12-13.

⁸Hochstetler, 678 and 685. Jonas, his brother Paul, and his brother Jacob (or perhaps his father, Jacob) were, in 1815, granted government deeds for adjoining properties; A. Roscoe Miller, 12.

⁹Beachy, "Settling the Valley," 14.

¹⁰Miller, 9.

¹¹Glick, 4.; A. Roscoe Miller, 10.

¹²Hochstetler, 37, 25.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Betty Miller, 27-28; Ivan I. Miller, "The Tom Lions Legend," (unpublished paper, July 1993).

¹⁵A. Roscoe Miller, 10.

¹⁶Jacob Hochstetler was the father of Barbara Hochstetler, the mother of Jacob Stutzman, father of Jonas Stutzmann; Hochstetler, 37.

¹⁷Betty Miller, 28.

¹⁸When I interviewed him at his home in Berlin, Ohio, on 21 July, 1994, Leroy Beachy recounted the departure as follows: The Indians were elderly. When their tribes left, they stayed behind to die in familiar lands. They lived beneath an overhang formed at

the bend of a creek near present Berlin. In the harsh winter of 1823-1824, they would have died if not for Beachy's ancestor Joshua Yoder, who traveled two miles taking them a sack of cornmeal. In the spring of 1824, a day before their forced march West, they returned to Joshua Yoder and gave him six arrowheads, one for each life saved by his gift of corn meal. See also, Beachy, "Settling the Valley," 15.

¹⁹There is no record to confirm Nussbaum's account of an individual named Stutzman owning "900 acres"; however, the figure seems fitting as an estimate of the combined landholdings of the family.

²⁰The Hans Nussbaum letter was reprinted in *The Budget*, Sugarcreek, Ohio, Thursday, February 1950.

²¹Hochstetler, 685.

²²The obituary of Jonas Stutzmann appeared in *Herald of Truth*, March 1872, 46.

²³David Luthy, " 'White' Jonas Stutzman," *Family Life*, February 1980, 19.

²⁴1850 United States Census, Jonas Stutzmann, Box 696, Walnut Creek Township, Holmes County, Ohio, page 205, dwelling number 1676, family number 708 (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration), microfilm reel 696.

²⁵H. J. Nothnagel, *The Canton Repository*, Canton, Ohio, July 25, 1849, quoted in Leroy Beachy, "Unser Leit," *The Budget*, Sugarcreek, Ohio, January 27, 1988.

²⁶Jonas Stutzmann, *First, Second and Third Appeals to All Men* (Canton, OH: H. J. Nothnagel 1850), 1, 4.

²⁷In the introduction to *Third Appeal*, Jonas wrote, "Already before this I have caused a very extensive publication of the two preceding appeals." Ibid, 8-9.

²⁸Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 80-86.

²⁹Stutzmann, *Appeals*, 4.

³⁰Ibid., 7.

³¹Ibid., 8.

³²Ibid., 11.

³³John Philip Shabalie, *The Wondering Soul*, 2nd revised ed., translated from Dutch into German and from German into English (Lancaster, Pa.: John Baer's Sons, 1874), 42-43.

³⁴Stutzmann, *Appeals*, 10.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Stutzmann, *Appeals*, 24.

³⁷John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society*,

3rd ed. (1983; reprint, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 193.

³⁸Stutzmann, *Appeals*, 29.

³⁹Stutzmann, *Sendschreiben*, translated by Andre Gingerich Stoner (forthcoming from Walnut Creek, OH: Carlisle Printing), 6.

⁴⁰Ibid., 1.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.; idem, *Appeals*, 5, 14.

⁴⁴Stutzmann, *Sendschreiben*, 1; idem, *Appeals*, 14.

⁴⁵Beachy, *Budget*, April 6, 1988.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Stutzmann, *Sendschreiben*, 2, 3.

⁴⁸Stutzmann, *Appeals*, 1.

⁴⁹Hochstetler, 883.

⁵⁰Beachy, "Settling the Valley," 16.

⁵¹Stutzmann, *Appeals*, 18.

⁵²Jonas Stutzmann's "chair for Jesus" is on display at "Behalt," the Amish and Mennonite information center in Berlin, Ohio.

⁵³Hochstetler, 685.

⁵⁴This positive appraisal of Jonas Stutzmann's eccentric dress is expressed in Scott Holland's narrative, "We Have Given Up the Kissing Part, Long Ago and Without Protest," *Festival Quarterly*, Fall 1994, 13.

⁵⁵Luthy, 19.

⁵⁶A. Roscoe Miller, 31.

⁵⁷Stutzmann, *Appeals*, 14.

⁵⁸Stutzmann, *Sendschreiben*, 1.

⁵⁹Ibid., 6; idem, *Appeals*, 18.

⁶⁰When I interviewed Norman Swartzentruber at his home in Goshen, Indiana, in January, 1995, he shared this story. Swartzentruber, a descendant of Jonas Stutzmann, had visited the current owners of both clocks formerly owned by Stutzmann.

⁶¹Wayne J. Hochstetler, around 1970, found *Appeals* among two truckloads of "stuff" taken from the attic of a home in New Bedford, Ohio, where Mr. Ira Funk and his two sisters had lived. "I found Reformed church papers published in Chambersburg, Pa., which they had sewed together one or two years . . . and by paging through I noticed this booklet sewed in the middle of it," said Hochstetler; see Luthy, 20.

⁶²In a telephone interview with the author on September 13, 1994, M. Leroy Chrisman of Holmes County, Ohio, reported finding *Sendschreiben* that fall in a collection of books donated to the Genza Valley Anabaptist Library by professor William I Schreiber. Genza Valley Anabaptist Library reprinted 300 copies of *Sendschreiben* through

Carlisle Printing, Walnut Creek, Ohio, in 1994.

⁶³Leroy Beachy, *Cemetery Directory of the Amish Community in Eastern Holmes and Adjoining Counties in Ohio* (printed by the author, 1975), 104-105.

⁶⁴"Deaths," *Herald of Truth*, March 1872, 46.

⁶⁵Luthy, 21.

⁶⁶Stutzman, *Appeals*, 12-13.

⁶⁷Glick, *Historical Sketch*, 5; Ervin Schlabach, "A History of the Walnut Creek Mennonite Church," in Miller, ed., *Sesquicentennial History*, 192.

⁶⁸By contrast, his son Eli, who died only seven days later, was given a funeral with sermons by the traditionalist leaders Shem and Levi Miller. "Deaths," *Herald of Truth*, March 1872, 46.

⁶⁹Glick, 5.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹For relevant historical maps see Betty Miller, 30; Hostetler, 13, 15; A. Roscoe Miller, 8; and J. Virgil Miller, John M. Slabaugh and Wade Miller, *Self-Guided Tour Booklet, Wayne, Holmes & Tuscarawas Counties, Places of Interest, Jacob Hochstetler Descendants* (Sugarcreek, OH: Schlabach Printers, 1993), 10-17.

⁷²Ervin Schlabach, *The Amish and Mennonites at Walnut Creek*

(Sugarcreek, OH: Schlabach Printers, 1981), 48-49.

⁷³Stutzmann, *Appeals*, 21.

⁷⁴Stutzmann, *Sendschreiben*, 1.

⁷⁵Stutzmann, *Appeals*, 21.

⁷⁶Ibid., 5.

⁷⁷In 1964 when State Highway 39 was rerouted, the Stutzman family cemetery was razed. Jonas had been buried there with his wives, his father, his sister-in-law, and at least two, perhaps 11 of his children. Lamenting desecration of the burial site, Leroy Beachy wrote, "Of at least seven and possibly as many as 10 to 15 burials, one loader scoop of decayed remains was transported to the present location [Walnut Creek Mennonite Cemetery]. Four of the best preserved markers were moved and placed over the remains. *Cemetery Directory*, 105.

⁷⁸Upon reviewing my an earlier draft of this biography, John D. Roth, associate professor of history at Goshen College and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, suggested a number of questions that may merit further research.



“An Unscriptural Passion” or “A Mighty Power”:

The Advent of Sunday Schools in the Mennonite Church

by John E. Sharp

Sunday school is taken for granted these days; it is firmly entrenched as an institution in the Mennonite Church. But that was not always the case. Sunday schools had a rough beginning. Some called it “an unscriptural passion of the latter days.” Others called it “of the devil.”

John F. Funk called it “a mighty power” that could invigorate the Mennonite Church. The Sunday school movement did indeed bring new life to the church. H. S. Bender, noting the centennial of the first Mennonite Sunday school in North America (1940), wrote, “The Sunday-school page is one of the brightest pages in the book of recent Mennonite history, for throughout the length and breadth of the church . . . the Sunday school has become a vital part of the church program.”¹

Sunday school was originally

conceived by Robert Raikes in England in 1780 to keep the young children of factory workers off the streets and to provide them a measure of moral instruction. It was soon imported to the Eastern Seaboard cities of North America, where it was reshaped, and by 1815 it became a powerful popular movement. By 1824 it was institutionalized by the American Sunday School Union.

Mennonite children who attended nondenominational “union” Sunday schools, and parents who observed these schools were favorably impressed. David Plank of West Liberty, Ohio, visited a union Sunday school in his neighborhood and was amazed by the enthusiastic participation of children. He saw children eagerly reciting verses and answering questions in striking contrast to his own congregation. In the typical Mennonite congregation in the 1850s, children were ignored unless their disorderliness called down a rebuke from the pulpit. There was little to warrant their

attention. Preaching services were opened by the deacon’s reading of a full chapter, with appropriate exhortation and prayer. This “opening” was followed by a substantial main sermon of 1-2 hours. When the sermon was ended, each minister present added his affirmation and further admonitions. The children who endured these marathons of sermons and testimonials were “nothing more than a problem and often a very trying one.”² David was impressed by the teaching and learning that took place in the union Sunday school.

Motivated by such positive educational models, David Plank and other individuals resolved to do what they could to bring Sunday schools into Mennonite congregations. The first such initiative took place in Waterloo County, Ontario, in 1840. An editorial in *Der Deutsche Kanadier*, October 1841, published in Berlin (now Kitchener), noted the new program: “The Sunday school started last year and begun anew this year, which has been held inter-



David Castillo and Spanish (Mexican) Sunday School at La Juanta, Colorado. Attendance 93, 1940. Source: Chicago Home Mission Collection.

changeably in the Wanner and Bechtel meetinghouses in the eastern part of Waterloo, is enjoying good progress. The number of children is increasing and amounted to 75 last Sunday."³

Two years later Nicholas Johnson, bishop of the Masontown, Pa., congregation in western Pennsylvania, followed suit. He taught his Sunday school classes in a small stone house built over a spring on the Johnson farm. At the bishop's death, John F. Funk wrote a long obituary in which he noted Johnson's initiative: "In this church in the year 1842, he (Johnson) took an active and leading part among the members of the church in organizing and conducting a Sabbath school. This, it is believed, was the first Sabbath school established in the Mennonite Church within the United States."⁴ A bronze and stone marker by the Masontown meetinghouse marks this historic advent.

Other Sunday schools soon followed in Canada and the U.S. But the Sunday school movement had not yet taken root. None of these 1840s initiatives lasted; they were temporary and seasonal—held from May to November. It took another 20 years for Mennonite Sunday

schools to become permanent and "evergreen" (held year around).

In 1863 Preacher David Plank, who had been so impressed by a union Sunday school in his neighborhood, succeeded in organizing the first permanent Sunday school for his Amish Mennonite congregation (South Union) near West Liberty, Ohio. With the support of his bishop, Jacob C. Kanagy, and the unanimous vote of his Amish Mennonite congregation, Plank initiated, organized, taught, and managed this Sunday school. Plank's record book carries his first entry written in German in an artistic hand: "J. C. Kanagy and D. Plank, ministers of the church of God in this vicinity (Logan County, Ohio), have decided with the counsel [of the church] to organize a Sunday school in the name of God for we believe quite confidently that if the fathers and mothers give us their support, much good will arise out of it."⁵ A historical marker at the South Union meetinghouse commemorates the beginning of the first permanent Sunday school, June 7, 1863.

Soon after Plank's school was begun, many others were opened across the church. It was easier for Amish Mennonites to initiate such a

change, because they were congregational and needed no approval by a conference. In Mennonite congregations of the East, such a move had to be approved by the district conference. Ohio conference was the first to approve Sunday schools in 1867. Virginia Conference followed the same year.

In the April 1870 issue of the *Herald of Truth*, editor John F. Funk rejoiced that "most of our conferences have given consent to holding Sabbath school . . . in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and other places." Bender summarized the momentum: "By 1890 when the first Sunday-school conference was held in Kitchener, Ontario, and 1892 when the first Sunday-school conference was held in the United States near Goshen, Indiana (Clinton Frame), the main body of the Mennonite and Amish Mennonite churches had accepted the Sunday school. The symbol of victory came in 1880 with the publication of Sunday-school question books authorized by the Lancaster Conference (compiled by Amos Herr, John F. Funk, and Jacob N. Brubacher). The victory was sealed with the establishment of Mennonite lesson helps in 1890 in

the form of an English and German quarterly published by the Mennonite Publishing Company at Elkhart, Indiana, and edited by J. S. Coffman, and capped with the general Sunday School Conference near Goshen, Indiana, in 1892."⁶

The use of the word "victory" is not without significance. It had indeed been a conflict with many battles waged against it. Just as the promoters argued that young people were being lost to the church because of the lack of Sunday schools, opponents argued that more young people would be lost because of the worldliness, vanity, and pride promoted by the new schools.

An undated and unsigned list of 26 objections to Sunday schools was written and circulated by members of the Mennonite Church in Rockingham County, Virginia. This group was opposed because unordained members, women, and non-members were allowed to teach. Books other than the sacred Scriptures were used, including some written by "societies not opposed to war, bloodshed, or . . . suing at law." They claimed that Sunday school was presented to the young people "as a way better than that practiced by our forefathers," and it promoted contact with people outside the fellowship.


The concluding statement was a demand that their ministers "show



Entire school at Dearborn St Mission, February 1946.

us direct scriptural authority for such a Sunday S. system, cite the passages by which such organizations are ordering or commanding (*sic*). If they cannot do it, we demand that these Sunday S. be laid aside as an unscriptural passion of the latter days." A postscript asked, "Why shall we stand still and fold our arms and look on this sad corruption in our own Mennonite church?" It ended with an admonition to "Remember the zeal of our forefathers."⁷

Advocates were not deterred. John F. Funk devoted more time and energy than anyone in promoting Sunday schools. He could well be called the "premier pioneer of Mennonite Sunday schools" (and of publishing, missions, relief, and mutual aid). After the battle had been won, he wrote "we rejoice over the work that was inaugurated by a few men (*sic*), with feeble effort, but which now has become a mighty power, and the means through which many precious souls have been led to take refuge in the arms of Jesus . . ." He further believed that the Sunday school movement would launch many new initiatives. In this he was right. Before he died in 1930, he saw many hundreds of people, young and old, using their gifts to teach, lead, organize, administer, and evangelize. It was the

Sunday school that opened these doors. It had indeed become "a mighty power" for good in the Mennonite Church. 

—This article was first published in *Builder*, February 1997, and is reprinted here with permission of Mennonite Publishing House.

Notes

1. Bender, Harold S., *Introduction to Ohio Mennonite Sunday Schools*, by John S. Umble, Mennonite Historical Society, 1941, p. vii.
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3. Bender, Harold S., *Mennonite Sunday School Centennial 1840-1940: An Appreciation of Our Sunday Schools*, Mennonite Publishing House, 1940, p. 14.
4. Funk, John F., *Herald of Truth*, May 1873.
5. Stoltzfus, Grant M., *Mennonites of the Ohio and Eastern Conference from the Colonial Period in Pennsylvania to 1968*, Herald Press, 1969, p. 110.
6. Bender, op cit., p., 24.
7. Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., Hist Mss 1-19, J. S. Coffman, 11/4.
8. Funk, John F., "Sunday School History," *Autobiography* 1928, p. 22, Hist Mss 1-1-3, 48/4, Archives of the Mennonite Church.



Sept. 28.—Isaiah 55: 1-12.
GOLDEN TEXT.—For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.—John 3: 16.
MEMORY VERSE.—For God so loved the world, that he gave his . . . Son.—John 3: 16.
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